

# Industrial Worker

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## Making dreams real

BY ARTHUR J. MILLER

After years of working on ships, I have often wondered about the romantic image ships have for many people. I have worked other jobs that have also had an image that did not fit reality.

I have been a roughneck on a wildcat oilrig, a zinc stripper in the hard rock mining industry, and a long haul truck driver. Each has its own image far removed from the reality of the job. Once, while in a discussion with another Wobbly, talking about the types of work we had done, he said he thought that I had lived an interesting life. He said that he had only worked a few warehouses and then became an office worker. I realize that every job has its downside, but I have never held a job that I would recommend even to someone whom I disliked.

I have come to understand that the dominant culture has a necessity to create myths. These myths are a controlling factor in the lives of working people.

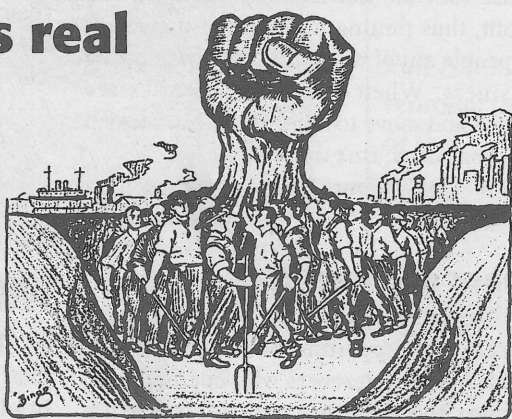
There are few working people who are satisfied with their jobs. We all long for something else, for we become tired of the boredom and the conditions of our work. So we dream of being something other than what we are. That is the controlling factor, because, if our internal spirit is directed to fantasies rather than the reality of our lives, then we are not focusing on making our reality a better place.

Years ago there used to be a working class culture that included writers, artists, publishers, poets, songwriters and others. Through whatever means they chose to use, they expressed the struggles, hopes, joys and other experiences of working people from a first-hand perspective. In other words, they were working people speaking for themselves. Unfortunately, in today's world where almost everyone gets their "culture" out of a square box that they plug themselves into, true working class culture has almost disappeared.

Even among today's radicals, you will find far too many of them plugged into some lifeless machine rather than existing in the real world. Our culture now comes to us from the outside; it is no longer something we have any direct input into or control over. Our cultural role has become that of spectators of preprogrammed fictitious experiences sold to us by the capitalist class.

This new culture does not reflect our lives, our thoughts, or our experiences. Rather the new culture seeks to control and manipulate us for profit. Whereas once our culture enhanced our lives, today culture is used to keep us enslaved. Today the message of the media is "work, consume and reproduce" – and therein lies the only value of our lives. When the modern media does take a look at working class life, it does so from the outside looking in. Working people are stereotyped into the safety of confined spaces that conform to the capitalist class's view of what working class

*continued on page 10*



### Tyson Foods vs. the world

Pepperoni workers refuse to be sliced and diced **5**

### May Day is World Labor Day

Millions take to streets for May Day marches, rallies, celebrations **6**

### Police storm Brukman factory

Garment workers evicted from Buenos Aires cooperative **7**

## 2 million die each year in workplace carnage

More than two million workers are killed by their jobs every year, according to a study by the UN-affiliated International Labour Organization – and that's just a small fraction of the carnage at work, says Jukka Takala, director of the ILO's SafeWork program.

More than 350,000 workers die on the job each year, with the remaining deaths resulting from long-term occupational illness. Some 160 million workers around the globe suffer from work-related diseases.

Unions in more than 100 countries took part in April 28 Workers Memorial Day events to honor the dead and fight for the living through improved safety and health at the workplace, in a program initiated several years ago by the AFL-CIO.

In the United States, 16 workers were killed and more than 14,900 were injured or made ill each day during 2001, the most recent year for which figures are available. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports there were 5,900 workplace deaths that year (not counting 2,886 workplace fatalities resulting from the Sept. 11 attacks).

These statistics do not include deaths from occupational diseases, which kill an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 workers each year.

Some 5.2 million injuries and illnesses were reported in private sector workplaces that year, with an additional 639,500 injuries and illnesses reported in the 29 states and territories where this data is collected.

These figures are drawn from employers' reports, and do not include injuries or illnesses which did not result in at least one day of missed work. While injury and illness cases resulting in days away from work have been declining in recent years, the AFL-CIO reports, the number of workers on restricted

duty is increasing.

U.S. employers are increasingly placing workers on restricted duty instead of sending them home to recover, in part to avoid triggering Occupational Safety & Health Administration inspections. Programs that reward workers for low injury rates or discipline them for reporting injuries also discourage full reporting.

### Crime does pay, for bosses

Bosses who maintain unsafe conditions risk only the most trivial sanctions. The average penalty for "serious" violations of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Act is just \$886. A violation is considered "serious" if it poses a substantial probability of death or serious physical harm. At current levels it would take OSHA 115 years to inspect each workplace under its jurisdiction just once.

President Bush's proposed FY 2004 budget cuts OSHA funding by \$3.2 million, and cuts \$4.9 million from the agency that oversees mine safety. The NIOSH (which researches safety and health issues) budget would be cut by \$28.9 million.

Instead the Bush Administration relies heavily on voluntary guidance and outreach to the business community. In particular, OSHA is expanded its program of "alliances" with employer groups, in which it meets with employers (but not workers or unions) to discuss safety concerns.

Ergonomic injuries are still the biggest job safety hazard faced by workers. Nearly half of reported injuries and illnesses are musculoskeletal disorder cases, caused by repetitive motion, poor workstation design, and similar factors. Many if not most of these

*continued on page 9*

## Trucking bosses demand 11-hour shifts

BY CHARLES WALKER

U.S. trucking bosses – with the active connivance of the federal government – are set to squeeze even more sweat and profit from the labor of their freight workers. Come January, all freight drivers may be legally compelled to stay behind the wheel for up to 11 hours, instead of the present 10 hours, a limit put in place in 1939.

If that sounds outrageous because of the vast increase in freight industry productivity in the past 60 years due to modern highways and speedier and larger vehicles, think about this: Real wages for freight drivers are lower today than they were in 1980. Teamsters union truckers earn nearly 20 percent less, and non-union drivers earn more than 28 percent less, than they did almost 25 years ago, according to industry analysts.

Even before the projected lengthening of driving hours, the largely deregulated U.S. trucking industry was rightly compared to a sweatshop on 18 wheels. Most often paid by the mile, drivers cram 100,000 miles or many more into a work year. Truck drivers lead the nation in the number of occupational illnesses and injuries requiring lost work time.

Allowing – actually, the dog-eat-dog competition within the trucking industry means compelling – 10 percent more hours behind the wheel is sure to increase driver fatigue and that means greater danger on the highways, says the Teamsters Union. The rank and file caucus, the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, agrees, noting that the

change in permitted driving hours "benefits industry profits, not highway safety." The *New York Times* reported April 25 that, "In 1990, a National Transportation Safety Board study found that 33 percent of crashes in which truck drivers died involved fatigue. A study done in New York in 1997 found that 47 percent of truck drivers reported falling asleep at the wheel some time in their driving career and that 25 percent reported dozing off at least once in the previous year." A spokesperson for a highway safety group told the *Washington Post* (April 24), "We are talking about a profession where fatigue is a major safety problem. If airline pilots were falling asleep on the job, I doubt we would add more time in the cockpit."

Many drivers fight the inevitable over-the-road fatigue with harmful drugs, at the same time that they try to counter falling real wages by driving even longer than regulations allow. The federal government relies on drivers' logbooks to monitor hours, but it's common knowledge that many drivers, even union drivers, falsify their logbooks. For the fast-growing numbers of so-called owner-operators, who are their own nominal bosses and who must earn a living as well as keep up their truck payments, the last thing on their mind is to pull over for some shut-eye when they're facing losing their truck.

While some truckers are paid by the hour, many more are paid by the mile or the load, a form of piecework. The whole point

*continued on page 8*

Letters **2** IWW Organizing Gains **3** Craft Unions Sink Maritime Workers **4**  
Contracts that Work for Workers **7** Shorter Hours **8** Unionists Jailed **12**

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## Jail and presidents

As a substitute teacher, I recently had a special education class, in which I put the following question on the black board: "Who ran for president from jail and got almost a million votes?"

The students thought it was odd that someone could run for president when he was in jail. I told them that in 1920 Eugene Victor Debs ran for president from jail.

None of them had heard of Debs. Why was he in jail? I said that it was because he opposed World War One. One girl couldn't understand why someone would go to jail for not wanting to kill when people went to jail for killing. It didn't make sense to her. So an innocent sense of right and wrong offset a lack of historical knowledge.

Yours for the OBU,

Raymond Solomon, editor, *Free Voices*

## Venezuela & phony unions

According to some commentators, the recent labour dispute in Venezuela was an example of a "General Strike," one which was thwarted by that lousy authoritarian Hugo Chávez.

This brief analysis is shared by the mainstream press as well as some people in the alternative media. Even my favorite newspaper, the *Industrial Worker*, substantially bought that line. There's a small problem, however: it's almost totally wrong. The dispute which began in December 2002 in Venezuela was a lockout.

There was no election held by the workers in favor of a cessation of work. What's worse is the trade unions and worker federations that participated haven't even held elections for literally decades on end. Traditional unions in Venezuela have not been democratic institutions at all.

Only 10% of workers in Venezuela belong to a union, even lower than in the U.S.

A new federation of labour is currently being formed.

And this new federation is not an initiative of President Chávez. Instead, it's being put together by the trade unions in Venezuela that have relied on a mandate from their members.

"Strike, lockout—what's the difference?"

some may ask. There's a very big difference—a strike is initiated by workers against their bosses whereas a lockout is a tool of the employers. In this case, the business owners

of Venezuela wanted to once again tighten the screws on President Chávez.

When workers aren't allowed to have any say in an impending work stoppage, like recently in Venezuela, that's a lockout. It wasn't a strike at all, let alone a general strike.

In general, you are insulting workers when you call a lockout a strike. A really good example was the lockout of the bus drivers in Vancouver, Canada, in 2001. The media constantly portrayed the lockout as a strike. I think a lot of transit-dependent people unfortunately blamed the drivers for not providing service.

The lockout failed to dislodge Chávez. And, as usual, it was the workers themselves who deserve all the credit. True, employers and non-elected labour leaders tried to close the state run oil company. But blue collar workers, the ones who never voted for a strike, reopened the company.

This in turn allowed the government of Chávez some breathing room. After 63 days, the lockout ended.

The lockout has politicized many workers in Venezuela, not to support this or that politician either. Rather, it's led to several workplaces being taken over by the workers themselves.

It's almost always a mistake to think things will substantially change just because you vote this way or that. But, that said, there are significant differences between politicians in terms of how much they're willing to lie and how much they're prepared to resort to

arbitrary coercion to achieve their ends. Bush and Blair are willing to kill thousands of Iraqi civilians to reach their goal. Killing thousands of non-combatants are examples of arbitrary coercion. But at least Chávez refrained from shooting people to end his lockout. That's a difference.

And at least Chávez is not allowing Venezuela to take part in the so-called Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Finally, at least Chávez properly acknowledges that it was the Venezuelan people who, despite murderous fire from elements of the military, restored his presidency in April of 2002.

Mark Dickson

*Editor's Note: For readers understandably unable to recognize the article complained of here, it appeared on page 12 of our April issue.*

## Big business on strike

Big Bill Haywood said that not only does labor strike, but that big business also goes on strike. When a plant or factory that the people of an entire town depends on for employment is closed, that is a strike. Michael Moore's movie "Roger and Me" was about that.

When departments are closed not because they are not making a profit, but because they are not making "enough" of a profit, thus putting hundreds of thousands of people out of work, that is a strike by big business. When American factories are closed and move to South America, Mexico or Bangladesh, isn't that a strike?

Yours for the One Big Union

Raymond Solomon

## Labor and war

I especially liked the attack on John Sweeney for supporting the war on Iraq. The California AFT teachers who opposed both the war and their own national leadership who supported it (just like the AFT did in the 1960s and 1970s when AFT President Al Shanker was supporting the Vietnam War). Also the wonderful Argentineans who seized the ceramics factory and refused to give it back.

Sidney Spiegel

## The Ballad of Check 'n' Go

I wrote this after a recent trip to Check 'n' Go, and thought it might be appropriate for your pages.

Greg Farnum

*To be sung to the tune of the marching, or running, song that Vietnam veterans will remember well.*

Everybody wants to know  
How to get to Check 'n' Go.  
That's because we're all in debt,  
Better days we ain't seen yet.  
*Chorus: Sound off one two three four  
Five six unpaid bills!*  
Don't be bashful, don't have pride,  
Don't be angry when they're snide.  
When they say your form's not right  
Just keep smiling nice and bright.  
*Chorus: Sound off one two three four  
Five six bouncing checks!*  
Remember you'll be back again  
So when you hear this keep your grin:  
"These addresses just don't match,  
You don't get no spending cash."  
*Chorus: Sound off one two three four  
Five six threatening letters!*  
All those folks behind a desk  
Are just wage slaves like all the rest,  
And though they're acting mighty fine  
Someday they'll be the next in line.  
*Chorus: Sound off one two three four  
Five six shutoff notes!*  
There's Cash Connection, Cash on the Go  
And several more of which you know,  
But someday—and it could be soon,  
The people, united, will end this tune.  
*Chorus: Sound off one two three four  
Five six times too many!*

## Midwest Wob Fest

The Milwaukee GMB is hosting the annual Midwest IWW gathering June 20-22. In addition to music by labor musicians from around the union and art by Carlos Cortez, workshops will address IWW labor history, direct action, branch organization, and creative resistance. General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss will lead an organizer training. For information or to register (and for housing), call Gerry Gunderson at 414-543-8474.

## Industrial Worker

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Industrial Unionism

- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ EMANCIPATION

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## Stonemountain Fabrics organizes

Workers at Stonemountain & Daughter Fabrics in Berkeley voted unanimously (15-0) for IWW representation May 7, after management refused voluntary recognition. This is the San Francisco Bay Area IWW's second organizing victory in two months (East Bay Depot for Creative Reuse workers voted 13-0 to join the IWW in April).

Stonemountain workers decided to unionize after more than a year of efforts to resolve their grievances. Workers are demanding to be treated with respect, a grievance procedure, equitable pay rates, job descriptions, and access to benefits.

Stonemountain & Daughter Fabrics is an independent fabric store offering a wide array of specialized, high-quality textiles.

An April 13 rally and arts & crafts fair in front of the Depot saw 60 people come out in a show of solidarity. Depot Workers hosted an open mike that featured Depot Workers, workers from Stone Mountain & Daughter, rapper MC Lynx, and Earth First! activist Darryl Cherney. Two days later management laid off union supporter Emma Spurtus. Hours for other workers have been slashed, and management has closed the Depot on Sundays, its busiest day.

A short video made by the workers and their friends is available for viewing on the web at [www.iww.org/organize/news/depot/](http://www.iww.org/organize/news/depot/)

## Police attack Somerville Theater picket line

When Somerville (Mass.) Theater projectionists approached their manager to demand union recognition, he told them it had been nice knowing them. Workers had been attempting for months to resolve low pay and unhealthy working conditions before joining the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE, which represents projectionists in most Boston cinemas) and demanding recognition April 30. When management told IATSE that they refused to recognize the union May 1, projectionists set up picket lines.

The striking projectionists were joined on the picket line May 1 by members of IATSE and other local unions, and by dozens of community supporters. At its peak, the sidewalk in front of the theater was lined with 50 pickets chanting "Recognize the union, or the show will not go on."

After an hour of peaceful picketing, nearly two dozen Somerville and Medford police arrived, complete with a paddy wagon which they parked in front of the theater entrance. Police proceeded to mount several assaults on the picketline, knocking several workers to the ground, throwing one into oncoming traffic on the street, and hitting others with clubs. A member of the IWW was taken to hospital coughing up blood after he was choked by police. For several minutes as films were scheduled to begin, police forcibly prevented picketing in front of the theater.

While the projectionists were picketing outside, films were shown inside by a scab projectionist force lined up by the so-called Boston Independent Film Festival and secretly trained on the Somerville Theater equipment in the days leading up to workers' demand for union recognition. Thad Wilkerson (director of "An Injury To One," a new documentary about martyred IWW organizer Frank Little) pulled his film after learning of the strike from Boston Wobblies, but Festival promoters defied his wishes and screened the film anyway.

The projectionists are paid minimum wage, and work in unsafe conditions. Picketing continued on a daily basis for two weeks before projectionists made an unconditional offer to return to work pending a NLRB representation election. While many patrons were honoring the lines, management was able to maintain operations with a scab crew. At press time, the theater has not yet agreed to return the strikers to work, converting the strike into a lock-out. Informational picketing continues outside the theater.

# ACORN union-busting draws bosses' notice

In the wake of the National Labor Relations Board's ruling rejecting the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now's appeal of a ruling ordering it to reinstate and compensate three Dallas workers fired for IWW organizing efforts (see report last issue), a pro-management think tank issued a blistering May Day op-ed titled "May Day or Dis-May Day for Labor Activists."

The Employment Policies Institute's op-ed (and an accompanying report, "The Real ACORN") notes ACORN's "shocking degree of hypocrisy" in claiming to advocate for workers' rights at the same time that it engages in illegal union-busting, and notes that ACORN pays workers only \$5.67 per hour when salaries are adjusted to reflect overtime pay stemming from its mandatory 54-hour weeks. (The 54-hour week is actually a base, ACORN employees are often required to put in longer hours at peak campaign periods.) This is substantially less than minimum wage in several states in which ACORN operates.

The EPI is primarily interested in tarring the living wage movement and labor leaders who choose to overlook ACORN's sordid history, and its report (while damning) is a

hastily slammed-together compilation of two legal decisions, a government decision to cancel a grant to the ACORN Housing Corp. after determining that federal funds were illegally being used to support ACORN operations, an article on ACORN efforts to destroy a competing community group, and issues of *To-Gather*, the newsletter the IWW helped ACORN workers publish in 2001.

(The court decision that will be unfamiliar to IW readers is a 1995 case where ACORN sued the state of California in an unsuccessful effort to avoid paying minimum wage to its employees there. The appellate court dismissed as "absurd" ACORN's claim that it needed to pay rock-bottom wages so its employees would be better able to empathize with the low-income people they sought to sign up into ACORN.)

While EPI suggests that ACORN is profiteering off its low-income members, it fails to seriously investigate the tangle of ACORN-controlled for-profit and non-profit entities (even accepting ACORN's false claim that it is not a nonprofit organization and so not required to disclose financial information; information that is in fact filed with states that

Ontario, meeting reported last issue, the *Thunder Bay Post* ran a lengthy diatribe accusing the IWW of being "communist agents" headquartered in Moscow. The writer went on to warn that the IWW nearly brought down the economy with the strike wave we organized back in 1946!

The Chicago General Membership Branch has formed the Campus and Education Workers Industrial Organizing Committee to pursue several organizing leads, and joined May Day events including a march, film showing, and a May 3 program featuring labor songs, a one-act play depicting Harmarket Martyr Albert Parsons' last day before his execution, and an IWW speaker.

The Everett, Washington, Historical Commission is considering a proposal to

enforce public charities laws) and the flow of monies between them. Such an investigation would reveal that ACORN chief (and SEIU international vice president) Wade Rathke and his relatives draw multiple salaries from several ACORN-related entities and pass enormous sums of money through a for-profit corporation they control.

Similarly, while pointing to the hypocrisy of ACORN's support of living wage ordinances that exclude workers under union contracts from coverage (millions of union members work at or near minimum wage), the EPI report ignores ACORN's involvement in the embezzlement scandal that toppled the Teamsters' Carey administration. The report alludes only in passing to ACORN union-busting outside of Dallas, and never once mentions the name of the union (our union) which undertook the herculean task of helping ACORN workers in their struggle for basic rights and a living wage.

It is unfortunate that the labor movement has allowed its living wage campaign to be hijacked by the likes of ACORN, allowing pro-business outfits like EPI to tar the labor movement with ACORN's crimes.

erect a historical plaque on the site of the 1916 Everett Massacre, in which 10 Wobblies were killed by sheriff's deputies.

## Carleton University IWW projectionists certified

BY BRADEN CANNON, X351663

The Ontario Labour Relations Board issued a union certificate to the Carleton University Student Projectionists Job Branch, IU 620 (affiliated with the Ottawa-Outaouais GMB) April 11. This final certification allows the projectionists to begin negotiations with their employer. This certification also gives the IWW trade union status in the province of Ontario and is the first known OLRB-certified IWW job shop in the history of Ontario.

## Around Our Union

Sexual Assault and Support Services in Eugene, Oregon, voluntarily recognized the IWW, after deciding that the outcome of a scheduled NLRB representation election was a foregone conclusion. SASS's 12 workers are pressing for better working conditions.

The IWW has received new shop card applications from ThinkElectric (electricians) in Eugene and Solidarity Graphics in Lawrence, Kansas.

The Boston Area GMB filed unfair labor practice charges against Dare Family Services May 8 after weeks of trying to persuade management to begin bargaining. Workers unanimously chose IWW representation March 31.

Soon after the successful Thunder Bay,

### Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

## Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

**TO JOIN:** Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

- ☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- ☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- ☐ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

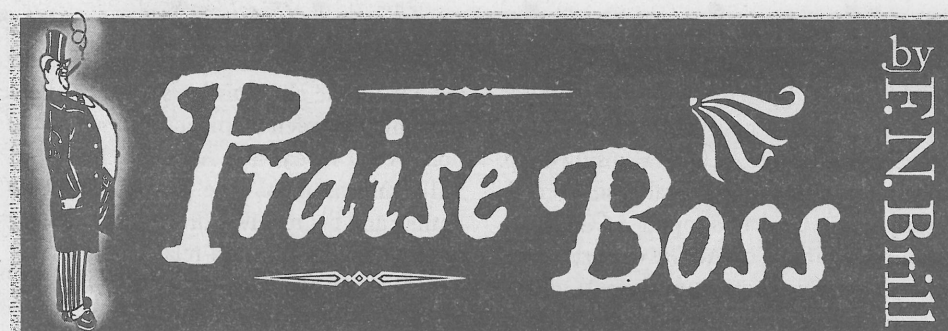
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.





What wonderful news! I saw today's *Oregonian* newspaper (emphasis on the "ew") and the headline was: "Job Losses leave Oregon wobbly." I don't know if that means the IWW is in control of Oregon or if an IWW here found work. Don't ask which it was because I wouldn't read that rag...

★ ★ ★

Something I know never made it into the daily rag was the full story of a missing elderly couple here in Oregon. The newspaper was full of accounts of how the couple had left Eugene and their car was found. Later a small sidebar announced their bodies were found in the woods. End of story as far as the paper was concerned. The couple were the grandparents of an acquaintance. The true story is that they had lost their prescription drug coverage through federal and state budget cuts. Rather than being a burden to their family, they went out into the woods and burned themselves to death.

★ ★ ★

How about that William Bennett? For those of you lucky enough to be ignorant of this toad's existence, William Bennett is a former U.S. government official in the Reagan and Bush the First regimes. Bennett has been lecturing to working people for a decade or so about the imperatives of "virtue" and how we have to live like him. Now it comes out that Mr. Virtue is a gambler ("but doesn't have a problem") who has lost most of the millions he made writing his virtue-filled books.

Bennett, on my S-list for over a decade, has finally shown his true colors. While the elderly in Oregon are killing themselves for lack of funds, the virtuous Bennett burns through money. We are led to believe that the U.S. government needs to cut its minimal health services in order to provide tax breaks for weasels like Bennett so they can pump it into the economy through gambling on either slots, video poker or the stock exchange. This hypocritical piece of crap has the gall to denounce gays as immoral, but pisses away enough money night after night on his own amusement that could have helped our elderly to not turn to burning themselves alive in desperation.

One Las Vegas insider is quoted in the *Washington Monthly* as saying about Bennett, "There's a term in the trade for (him), we call them losers."

★ ★ ★

Speaking of virtues and ethics, I would like to relate a true story that I heard from a friend. She (god only knows for what reason) was taking a business ethics class. The instructor tells the class the story of how J.P. Morgan made his first fortune. Morgan (who founded the Morgan Stanley Trust and other leading world financial institutions) was a young man during the American Civil War.

Having bought his way out of his duty of defending his country, Morgan decided to get rich off the war. He learned that a certain armory had manufactured rifles which had a flaw — they had a tendency to explode in the hands of the shooter, usually with the outcome of his losing his right thumb. The army had rejected the rifles and Morgan bought them, supposedly for scrap. Morgan then turned around and sold the rifles to a state militia as serviceable weapons. A huge killing (in more than one way) was made by Morgan and he was well on his way to be a virtuous rich man. Why was he virtuous? Because my friend's business ethics instructor told the class it was so. Yes, selling defective weapons is considered by college business instructors as moral and right. Enough said!

★ ★ ★

Actually not. I have been meditating on the "virtue" of Haliburton and Bechtel corporations being given no-bid (but virtuous!) contracts to rebuild the country (Iraq) that their owners (Bush and Company) bombed using weapons bought from other corporations the same folks own. I remember another totally ethical case of unbridled support for our troops by an virtuous American corporation. The Spanish-American war was fought by the U.S. to free Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines from Spanish tyranny while keeping them safely under our virtuous control. Sound familiar? So anyway, a certain meat packer who supplied the U.S. Army trying make up the loss for some recalled tinned meat (it was tainted with chemicals, I believe) decided to sell said tainted meat to the U.S. Army and our good troops in Cuba. The outcome of this very profitable and unpunished bit of capitalist ingenuity was that more U.S. troops died of food poisoning than from enemy bullets.

But that wouldn't happen again. Men like William Bennett and his friends, Bush and Reagan would never do that to our troops today. Agent Orange, depleted uranium cancer and Gulf War Syndrome just don't exist in a virtuous system. Understand?

★ ★ ★

While finishing this column I slipped into a deep trance and gazed upon the future Cooperative Commonwealth that the IWW helped form. Two folks are walking in a usually well-kept cemetery and come across an unkempt grave stone. Through the dirt they read "Here lies William Bennett, a capitalist and virtuous man." The two look at each other in puzzlement until one bursts out laughing. "What funny folks those capitalists were! Imagine burying three people in one grave!"

★ ★ ★

Oh Wobblies of little faith! The Las Vegas worker told the truth — Bennett, Bush and the whole lot are a bunch of losers. They are only powerful because we give up our power. They know that and that's why they feed us a line of crap daily in the 'ewspapers and build up the police. They know where the power lies and that is with us, the working class. So let's get up off our asses and shove their system and its virtues where the sun don't shine, in that unkempt but virtuous grave.

FN Brill, lacking virtue, works hard to support himself and his family. Despite this hard work, his income is slipping in comparison to the rulers of "his" country. Write him c/o IWW, 616 E. Burnside St., Portland OR 97214 USA or e-mail [fnbrill@yahoo.com](mailto:fnbrill@yahoo.com)

## Resources for unemployed workers

With the U.S. unemployment rate pushing 10 percent (once "discouraged" workers and those forced into part-time jobs are added back in), 3 million workers have exhausted their jobless benefits. A National Employment Law Project website ([www.UnemployedWorkers.org](http://www.UnemployedWorkers.org)) has up-to-date information on jobless benefits, efforts to extend federal benefits, and the growing unemployment crisis, and offers a forum for jobless workers to share their stories and concerns.

# Craft unionism sinks maritime workers

The April 25 issue of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific newspaper tells a sorry tale of how Matson Navigation was able to play the seafaring unions off against each other to gain massive concessions for its ships working the Hawaii trade. Other shipping lines are sure to demand similar concessions as their contracts expire.

The SUP, which is an affiliate of the Seafarers International Union, was one of six unions representing workers on Matson ships. In joint negotiations last year, the SUP, Marine Firemen and SIU Marine Cooks had reached agreements that explicitly included two new ships under construction at the Kvaerner Philadelphia Shipyard. The other three unions, ARA, MEBA and MM&P (representing licensed officers and radio operators), negotiate separately.

However, on Feb. 28, Matson announced that it no longer intended to buy the new vessels because its labor costs were too high. Instead, the company announced, it was seeking another company to buy the ships and lease them back to Matson to operate. This scheme would save money only by allowing Matson to escape its labor contracts and bring the ships under the parent SIU/NMU's national freight agreement, which allows for smaller crews and lower wages.

The SUP originally turned to an arbitrator to enforce its contract, but lost when the arbitrator ruled that the company could not be bound by agreements governing ships not yet in its fleet.

Faced with the threat to move the work to the competing "union" (which was long known as the Seascabbers International Union by bitter seamen whose strikes it broke), the SUP ultimately agreed to a 10-year contract (expiring in 2013) for the new ships which cuts crew sizes, reduces bosun pay by \$500 a month, eliminates overtime pay, and freezes other wages for the first two years. The agreement also trims previously negotiated pay hikes on other Matson ships, reduces crew levels and overtime, and ex-

## Reformers clean house at Ullico

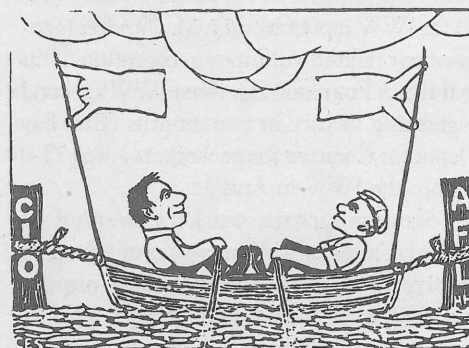
The board of directors of Ullico, a union-owned insurance firm, ousted CEO (and former AFL Building Trades head) Robert Georgine May 8, replacing him with Laborers' President Terence O'Sullivan. Ullico has suffered more than \$150 million in losses in the last two years, and has been the subject of four insider trading investigations.

A pointed statement by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, who quit Ullico's board last year when it failed to confront the growing scandal, praised O'Sullivan and IBEW President Ed Hill, the two board members who voted to release an internal report that found serious misconduct by Georgine and other board members.

O'Sullivan plans to select an insurance professional to run Ullico's daily operations. Ullico was founded in 1925 to provide low-cost insurance to workers; today it provides insurance to unions and their members, handles investments for unions and administers union benefit funds.

Ullico's new board is dominated by critics of the stock deals. Only two of the board members are holdovers, including O'Sullivan who did not participate in the scheme. The other holdover, Martin Maddaloni of the plumbers union, reluctantly agreed to return the \$418,880 he made from the stock trades.

Left unsolved is whether Georgine will be able to keep the more than \$23 million he made from Ullico in recent years. Georgine claims he is owed another \$2 million in severance pay, but has offered to return some money to cover his profits from the stock trading scheme.



*Now will they quit pulling against each other?*

tends the contract for an additional three years (to 2008). Pay and benefits for the final three years will be set by arbitration.

The SUP says it was "coerced and extorted into making concessions by the corporate pirates of Matson," but through "this rotten process" was able to save the Matson work for SUP members. However, a boxed news flash notes that even after signing the agreement, Matson is still telling stock analysts that it has "identified potential buyers [for the new ships] with lower costs from different unions" and may still go with the leasing option.

The SUP originally worked the West Coast and Pacific trade, while the parent SIU worked the Great Lakes, Gulf Coast and river trade. The National Maritime Union, which merged with the SIU two years ago, worked the Atlantic trade. (The licensed crafts, cooks, radio operators and other smaller crafts are represented by a patchwork quilt of small craft unions, many of which were affiliated to the SIU or NMU. Ferry and tug-boat workers on the West Coast are often represented by the ILWU-affiliated Inland Boatmen's Union or MEBA or the MM&P. These jurisdictions sometimes don't even correspond to craft divisions, but instead resulted from different unions staking out their turf over maritime workers.)

But commerce has never followed such neat jurisdictional lines, and the maritime unions have a long, sordid history of undercutting each other's pay and working conditions in order to claim more work and members. Evidently, even the fact that all of these unions are now part of the same parent union is not sufficient to overcome their long history of union scabbery.

For more details: <http://www.sailors.org/pdf/newsletter/wcs-april2003.pdf>

## Bosses "borrow" union dues

One of the many reasons the IWW refuses to accept dues check-off is because it places control of the union treasury in the hands of the boss. Roofers Local 30 (Philadelphia) has learned that lesson the hard way, after the International trusteeed them for falling behind in their per capita. Local 30 officials point out in their defense that the local has paid its per capita late for the past 15 years, and has no choice in the matter because building contractors sit on members' dues money for months before turning it over to the union.

"Contractors use the dues during the no work stretches," the ousted local president explains, turning over the dues money when business picks up. Why the union has tolerated this situation for years (and through a few administrations) is anyone's guess; but the big question is why any union would rely on the boss to collect union dues for it.

## Health Care Action Day

Jobs With Justice is urging workers to wear stickers supporting universal health care June 5, as part of efforts to increase pressure on employers and the government to address the health care crisis.

For more information: [www.jwj.org](http://www.jwj.org)



# Tyson Foods vs. the World

BY JOHN E. PECK, UW INFOSHOP (IWW E.W.I.U. 620), MADISON

Over 400 workers of UFCW Local 538 at the Tyson plant in Jefferson, Wisc., hit the picket line Feb. 28 rather than swallow a humiliating concession package that would cut pay on average 73 cents per hour, reduce sick leave by 60 percent, slash vacation time by 33 percent, and scrap severance pay, among many other insults. Tyson is refusing to seriously negotiate and is recruiting scabs.

Many Wobblies and other workers, students and farmers are coming out to support the strikers, joining picketers outside the plant gate; providing translators, speakers and musicians at rallies; raising money and collecting food to support workers' families; refusing to buy products that include Tyson pepperoni; and otherwise spreading the word of solidarity. Stores in Fort Atkinson, Jefferson and Johnson Creek have pulled Tyson products from their shelves, while students at the University of Wisconsin - White Water are making sure no scab pepperoni finds its way onto their campus.

Tyson Foods acquired the Jefferson plant as part of its leveraged \$3.2 billion buyout of IBP in 2001. That a once proud 120-year-old family-run business would be gobbled up by the largest meatpacker in the world is no surprise in the age of runaway corporate globalization. This move also added to Tyson's whopping \$1.7 billion debt, and executives are now keen to exploit Wisconsin workers to stave off their greedy creditors.

A similar union-busting scenario has hit meatpackers at Madison-based Oscar Mayer, which was bought out by Kraft Foods (aka Philip Morris) in the late 1990s and has since been squeezed as a hapless cash cow to pay off tobacco lawsuit claims. Of course, Tyson Foods' financial woes are not affecting those partying in the corporate penthouse — in 2002 John Tyson got a \$1 million salary, plus a \$3.48 million bonus.

Among corporate agribusiness outfits, Tyson has emerged as one of the worst bottom feeders, preying on workers, farmers and consumers alike. Thanks to a lucrative contract with McDonalds, Tyson now produces half of the chicken McNuggets sold in the United States and even created a new breed of chicken with bigger breasts called — guess what — the “Mr. McDonald.”

Tyson subcontracts its poultry raising to hapless farmers who never actually own the birds, and are instead run ragged by the production regimens of corporate assigned “flock managers.” In fact, these one-sided contracts forbid farmers from suing Tyson or engaging in any form of collective bargain-

ing. A 1995 survey by Louisiana Technical University found that a typical Tyson contract farmer had been raising chickens for 15 years, had three barns with flocks running round the clock, yet earned a measly \$12,000 annually and was still paying off debt! In many rural areas, a poultry farmer can no longer get a bank loan without a signed Tyson contract in hand.

Tyson is no stranger to such corporate malfeasance, though. According to John McMillan, an analyst with Prudential Securities, “the history of this company has been living on the edge.” Tyson has been fined repeatedly for violating federal child labor laws (hard to hide when a 15-year-old worker dies on the job), for discriminating against women and African-Americans in its hiring practices, and was most recently accused by the Labor Dept. of cheating workers out of \$340 million in “lost” wage hours.

Back in 1997 Tyson Foods paid out \$6 million to settle charges of bribery involving Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. The two Tyson executives jailed in the case were later pardoned by President Clinton. Betting on both sides of the coin, Tyson remains an influential bankroller of political aspirations by both the Clinton and Bush families.

Once contracted serfs turn over their animals to the corporate master, the scene only gets worse as you climb up the Tyson food chain. On March 26th, a federal jury in Chattanooga, Tenn., acquitted Tyson of conspiring to smuggle Latin American immigrants to work in their U.S. poultry plants after the Bush administration basically sabotaged its own INS case built upon undercover investigations going back to 1997.

Twenty years ago unionized meatpackers in the United States earned on average \$18 per hour, but now the industry standard is set by a low-wage often immigrant workforce with wages as low as \$6 per hour. In this race to the bottom, Tyson had no qualms about forging work papers, hiring “coyotes” to strong-arm recruits, screening misleading videos about the “good life” north of the border, and transporting workers from Mexico to the Midwest.

In U.S. packing plants, disassembly line speeds now run at three times the rate accepted in Europe, leading to horrific worker injuries. Tyson faces a 75 percent turnover rate each year among its 120,000 workers around the country, which is why it is so desperate for “throwaway” immigrants.

Such filthy, dangerous work also means

rampant food contamination. In June 1998 a Tyson plant in Arkansas had to recall 126,000 lbs of chicken nuggets and breast fillets after they were found to contain wire.

*Tyson has been fined repeatedly for violating federal child labor laws, discriminating against women and African-Americans, and was most recently accused of cheating workers out of \$340 million in “lost” wage hours...*

Like most agribusiness outfits, Tyson dunks its chickens in chilled water — more like a fecal soup — at the end of the slaughter line to increase their weight (by up to 8%). Thanks to this ploy, U.S. consumers shell out an extra \$40 million for bonus water in their Tyson chicken at the store each year. That such factory farm chickens are chockfull of antibiotic residues, hormones and re-

sistant pathogens is another dirty little secret of the industry. Over 80 percent of the antibiotics used in the U.S. are for “medicated” livestock feeds, contributing to the emergence of deadly “super germs” like E. coli O157:H7.

At the Tyson feed mill in aptly named Buzzard Bluff, Arkansas, over 10 million pounds of dead chickens are recycled into “fresh” chicken food each year. Such induced livestock cannibalism is known to spread disease between animals and even on to humans, as evidenced by the “Mad Cow” epidemic in Europe.

The ongoing struggle of the Tyson workers in Jefferson is part of a larger worldwide movement of community resistance against corporate agribusiness intent on reducing workers, food and consumers into expend-

able inputs, market commodities and captive buyers as part of the new 21st century global “free trade” regime. Those who care about workers rights, sustainable agriculture, food safety and consumer sovereignty should take action to support the strikers.

What you can do:

1.) Join the picket line and collect food and money for the UFCW “Adopt a Family” program. Checks can be made out to the UFCW Local 538 Strike Fund and sent to: 228 Myrtle St., Madison WI 53704. For updates on the strike, and more information, [www.tysonfamiliesstandup.org](http://www.tysonfamiliesstandup.org)

2.) Don't buy pizza made with Tyson's union-busting pepperoni! Most of the pepperoni from the Jefferson plant is purchased by Kraft (maker of Tombstone, DiGiorno, and Jacks Pizza), as well as Schwan's (largest frozen pizza peddler in the world, distributor of Tony's, and major source of public school pizza) and Pizza Hut (part of Yum! Brands, which also owns KFC and Taco Bell). Let these companies know you'd prefer union pepperoni (why not mail them back what you don't want?) and check which pizza is being served your children. CEO Betsy Holden, Kraft Foods, 1 Kraft Court, Glenview IL 60025, 1-800-323-0768; Chairman Alfred Schwan, Schwan's Foods, 115 W. College Dr., Marshall MN 56258, 1-888-SCHWANS; CEO Michael Rawlings, Pizza Hut, 14841 Dallas Parkway, Dallas TX 75240, 1-972-338-7700.

3.) Don't tolerate recruitment of scabs. Apparently, Tyson has had little luck finding scabs in Chicago, so now they're turning their eyes on Milwaukee. Let the scab agents know how you feel: Scott Mayer, QPS Staffing, 1077 W. Beloit Rd., Greenfield WI 53288.

## Azteca workers take fight inside

With their unfair labor practices charges settled, Azteca workers voted to end their seven-month strike and continue their fight for a first contract inside the plant. Azteca workers decided to return to work the way they left on Sept. 30, 2002, when they began their strike united and strong. The boycott of Azteca products is continuing.

On May 5, Azteca strikers marched together from the strike tent to the company's main office to notify management of their return to work. The strikers sent a clear message to the company that they are not giving up, chanting as they marched ¡Si se puede! (Yes we can) and ¡Que viva la lucha para la justicia! (Long live the fight for justice).

Azteca Foods workers, members of UE Local 1159, struck the tortilla manufacturer over unfair labor practices and to protest demands for takeaways. Not a single striker crossed the picket line during the seven-month strike. The strike cost Azteca Foods an estimated \$15 million in lost production.

For more info: [http://www.ranknfile-ue.org/1159azteca\\_home.html](http://www.ranknfile-ue.org/1159azteca_home.html)

## Governor flees workers' questions

California Gov. Gray Davis fled a NUMMI auto plant March 13 when workers began booing him as he began a photo-op walk. Workers shouted out questions: Why is Davis taking money from schools and giving it to NUMMI? Why is he taking money from schools and giving it to prisons?

When workers heard union officials would escort the governor through the plant, they made up some leaflets with information about Davis' record, sticking them on carriers as they went down the line.

As the state battles a fiscal crisis, Davis has given NUMMI \$6.4 million in tax dollars to “train” workers before the next model change. Meanwhile, he is cutting funds for education, the elderly, medical care for disabled children and other critical needs.

Many workers refused to identify with “their” company and celebrate this transfer of public money to a private (and profitable) corporation, as their union officials told them they should.

## ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF WORKER ORGANIZING

June 28 - June 29, 2003 in New York City  
City College of NY Center for Worker Education • 99 Hudson Street



What do we mean by alternative models of labor organizing, and why talk about it now? It is no secret that the American labor movement is facing a crisis. Labor law makes it difficult to organize, even in the most ideal conditions. Entrenched bureaucracies dominate too many of our unions. Even when a workplace is successfully organized, too often the contracts leave intact the bosses' ability to reorganize work and shut down the workplace.

We need to think about alternative forms of worker organizing — forms that do not rely on NLRB certification and that build workers' power on the job. In recent years, we have seen the emergence of workers centers, minority unions, community-based organizing and other attempts by workers to organize themselves outside of the traditional framework.

We see worker self-organizing as the best way to build a strong labor movement. We think that many groups of workers around the country have been experimenting with these new ideas. The purpose of getting together in New York at the end of June is to share the experiences of groups of workers who use alternative models of organizing. Participating groups include branches of the IWW, the Taxi Workers Alliance, the Restaurant Opportunities Center, the National Coalition of the Homeless, the Green Grocer campaign, Danzine, the Youngstown Workers Solidarity club, and more.

### TENTATIVE AGENDA

#### SATURDAY

10:00am: Welcoming discussion

10:30am: Attendees discuss their organizations

Noon: Lunch, provided on-site

1:00pm: In-depth discussions of different models: community labor organizing, workers centers, unions without contracts, minority unionism

5:00pm: Adjourn for dinner

6:00pm: Socializing and music

#### SUNDAY

9:00am: open for breakfast

10:00am – 12:00 noon: Workshops

- a) Workplace contractualism: pro and con
- b) Job zines: Worker self-publishing
- c) Independent contractors and worker organizing
- d) Developing leadership among members

Noon: Lunch, provided on-site

1:00pm – 3:00pm: Workshops

- a) Day labor organizing
- b) Organizing without contracts
- c) Organizing in high-turnover industries

3:00pm: Goodbye

Spanish translation will be available throughout the conference.

### For more information, call a conference organizer:

Andy Piascik: 718-624-8495

Alexis Buss: 215-222-1905

Staughton Lynd: 330-652-9635

To receive registration information by e-mail, write [juneconference@iww.org](mailto:juneconference@iww.org)



# Millions celebrate International Workers' Day

COMPILED FROM INDYMEDIA

Millions of workers across the world celebrated May Day this year, often with militant protests for higher wages, shorter hours and political change.

In Seoul, 20,000 South Korean marchers demanded that their work week be shortened from six days to five. They also chanted anti-globalization messages, including "Down down WTO!"

In Japan, hundreds of thousands of union members joined May Day rallies. Sri Lankan demonstrators gathered across the island, demanding a 25 percent pay increase for unskilled laborers, who earn about 5,000 rupees (US\$83) per month.

Thousands of Indonesian workers marched to the presidential palace in Jakarta and unfurled banners that read: "Hike wages by 100 percent" and "Stop U.S. colonialism in Iraq." Some 10,000 Filipinos spent May Day demanding that President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo resign, and protesting the effects of globalization on local industries.

Up to 20,000 people protested in Buenos Aires (Argentina) at Brukman and on the Plaza de Mayo. In Bolivia about 100,000 took part in a march in La Paz, and another 50,000 in El Alto. 200,000 took to the streets in Colombia.

London police fielded 4,000 police to prevent May Day protests against oil and munitions firms. Despite efforts to box them in, thousands of workers demonstrated throughout the city, closing the offices of Lockheed Martin for the day. Many people were arrested, and thousands were held for hours in Trafalgar Square. Unions also held their annual May Day parade, joined by anti-globalization groups.

In Switzerland, police in Berne used water cannon to keep some 300 demonstrators from entering a government-controlled



Argentinian workers protested neoliberalism and defended occupied factories

weapons company. The protesters were calling for a ban on arms exports.

In Zurich thousands of workers marched, condemning the war in Iraq and criticizing 'fat cat' managers who draw huge pay packets while the global economy stutters. "Yesterday Afghanistan, Today Iraq, Tomorrow ...?" read one banner carried by protesters who marched through Switzerland's financial capital.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions issued a call for employers and governments to show respect for workers. Even many AFL-CIO affiliates joined May Day actions, with the Communications Workers of America kicking off a campaign to support workers at the *Chinese Daily News* who voted to join the CWA, but are fighting management's refusal to recognize the union.

## Mayday Portland

The Portland IWW marched by itself as well as in a larger march this Mayday. Since the main march started in a Park a mile from the IWW hall, the IWW decided to hold our own feeder march to the main rally.

By the time we left a news reporter (we were assigned our own guy by the twice-weekly) we had a parade of 70 wobblies. We encouraged folks to either dress in red and black or in their Sunday best. We also carried IU banners, 4 hour day flags, OBU pennants and dozens of red IWW Ballons. Our march headed off with the GMB banner in from followed by drummers.

We caused quite a commotion coming into the Park Blocks. The cops followed us down Burnside St. and across the bridge over the Willamette River into downtown. This year's Mayday rally was sponsored by a coalition of unions and activists. It was smaller than last years, but still perhaps 2000 folks turned out. FW Morgan Miller gave a speech on behalf of the IWW.

After we marched around downtown, the IWW contingent left the main march and marched back over the Burnside Bridge followed by the police (8 cars for maybe 50 folks) as well as several news helicopters.

A large party ensued at the IWW hall, beer flowed, Cuban cigars were smoked, literature sold, and new members signed up. A wonderful time was had by all.

## Australia

IWW members joined the Labour Day march organised by the Queensland Council of Unions. Some 15,000 workers participated, most as part of union contingents, in a march to Brisbane's Musgrave Park, followed by a carnival/picnic.

An interesting dynamic saw state premier Peter Beattie and his cabinet members leading the march, while many rank-and-file workers were openly critical of his government. The teachers union marched with blue and green banners, 'Size does matter, Peter' and 'A smart state needs smart Government. It's a shame we haven't got one Mr Beattie!'

Most present were celebrating Labour Day, but the CPMEU and Builders Labourers were celebrating May Day. The MUA (maritime) advocated international cooperation to protect workers around the world.

In Melbourne, the Victorian Trades Hall Council's "militant unions" voted to again march on May 1 this year, while more conservative groups joined the official "May Day Committee" march the following Sunday. Until recently, most May Day celebrations were held on the weekend. But since the anti-globalisation 'push,' more workers and students have come out on May Day proper.

## Boston

Wobblies joined a march of 60 activists (and nearly as many cops) from Copley Square through the soggy streets of downtown Boston, joining up with a larger demonstration at City Hall called by the Massachusetts Legalization Coalition (immigrant groups fighting for the rights of undocumented workers), the ACLU, and United for Justice with Peace.

While smaller than last year's event, the rally had a more militant flavor – perhaps because most of the politicians were inside at a City Council hearing. Afterwards, brief picketing at nearby Unico protested their harassment of immigrant workers in the aftermath of the janitors' strike. Wobblies also joined a boisterous picket line at the Somerville Theater, helping hold the line against police assaults on the first day of a strike by projectionists tired of working in unventilated closets for minimum wage.

IW editor Jon Bekken spoke on the origins of May Day the next day, stressing the parallels between conditions in 1886 (long work hours, a largely immigrant labor force, and fierce repression) and today.



In London, May Day protests targeted companies tied to the invasion of Iraq

## New York May Day action protests war

For several weeks before the international workers holiday, the Wobblies in New York's Capital District were busy promoting a May Day rally to promote peace, calling for an end to the Iraqi war and the war on the working class.

In February, the Upstate N.Y. IWW adopted a resolution seeking voluntary work stoppages to send the clearest message to the U.S. ruling class that no war was worth fighting but the class war. "The biggest hurdle to clear to promote a general strike in these times is the 'official' labor movement," Upstate delegate Greg Giorgio explained.

"The AFL-CIO predictably adopted an anti-war resolution merely opposing a unilateral approach to attacking Iraq. The thing had no teeth in it. While many locals and labor councils did take a stand against any kind of a war, as a body the AFL merely postured on this issue. Then AFL boss Sweeney did his jingoistic thing once the death bombs started flying. We felt that a work stoppage to oppose war had to be organized via a more grassroots avenue, by individual workers or groups of workers," Giorgio added.

So Wobs encouraged workers to create their own work stoppage, of a duration to be determined by them, on or about May 1. A companion rally and march was set for May Day in downtown Schenectady, home to the

first organized U.S. sit-down strike by the IWW at the General Electric plant in December 1906. The Upstate branch has been active with vigils and pickets since the week of 9/11/01, and has played a key role in the anti-war movement in recent months.

While certainly an exciting idea, the May 1 event – dubbed "citystrike" by local Wobblies – didn't draw the desired support. But the IWW here looks at this experience as one to build from. "We've built stronger and more numerous contacts in our area. New members have signed on because of our out-front stance against the war with a working class vision. We're ready to do more than ever now," Giorgio concluded.

## Edmonton, Alberta

Edmonton IWW played a key role in organizing May Week events, which kicked off with an April 28 Intl. Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job. The next day, a workers art show opened. An exhibit from the Emma Goldman Papers was put up in conjunction with a conference on Culture and the State. Musical, poetry and theatrical performances celebrated workers' culture. Other events included "Drawing Resistance," featuring political art from across the continent; a retrospective of Ken Loach films; and of course a May Day march.

## Wobs support housing in May Day action

BY PAUL BOCKING

In recognition of May Day, the Peterborough Industrial Workers of the World joined our ally, the Peterborough Coalition Against Poverty, in kicking off a direct action campaign for affordable housing in Peterborough, Ontario. Over the next four months, PCAP will publicly visit abandoned buildings throughout the city which could be opened up for housing. One of these will be squatted. A few dozen people gathered on an overcast day in Confederation Park in downtown Peterborough. Speakers discussed May Day and the current state of the mainstream labour movement, and how poor people are being silenced and suppressed by the state.

After the rally, the crowd entered the street and marched to an extensive mansion; empty for two years after being sold by the local university to a private owner. He has publically stated, "It is too beautiful a home to convert into affordable apartments."

After a speaker addressed the building's history and a PCAP banner was hung from a second floor balcony, people discovered unlocked entrances into the mansion. PCAP members, Wobs and curious neighbours explored the expansive structure which we were surprised to discover was heavily heated. Not intending to occupy the build-

ing for strategic reasons, we later headed out, regrouping that evening at a well-attended music benefit organized by our group and featuring folk, funk and punk acts.

The Peterborough IWW will join PCAP's next housing action on June 15 (in recognition of a major protest by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty in Toronto which faced intense police repression, known as the Queen's Park police riot) while continuing with our own activities.

## OCAP trial ends in hung jury

A mistrial was declared in the case of three anti-poverty activists charged with inciting a riot at Queen's Park, Toronto, three years ago. The mistrial was declared on the fifth day of deliberations, after one juror had to be hospitalized and jurors repeatedly said they could not reach agreement.

The charges result from a June 15, 2000, demonstration in which more than 1,000 people marched on the Ontario legislature.

On trial were Ontario Coalition Against Poverty activists John Clarke (who spoke at the IWW's most recent General Assembly), Gaetan Heroux and Stefan Pilipa.

**Is the Industrial Worker  
available in your bookstore?  
Why not take a bundle?**



# French unions strike against pension “reform”

Much of France ground to a halt May 13 as unions launched a general strike against pension reform, in the biggest challenge yet to the centre-right government of Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin.

With practically the entire metro system closed down in Paris and few buses running, commuters who went to work had to walk or cycle. Public transport was at a near standstill in around 80 other towns and cities.

At airports, air traffic controllers, customs officials and Air France staff joined the strike. Regional rail services operated a skeleton service.

Schools, hospitals, ministries and the post office were all closed by the strike.

The most important show of union strength in France since 1995 is aimed at forcing the government abandon its plans to gut the country's pension system. As in 1995, when unions struck over similar concerns, opinion polls show that two-thirds of the public side with their demands.

The “reforms” would force public sector workers to put in two and a half more years on the job to qualify for full pensions by 2008, and would require all workers to put in another two years on the job by 2020. The government also hopes to encourage workers to keep working past retirement age, and to develop a system of private retirement accounts that could weaken support for the current public system.

Unions say the proposals would cause pensions to fall by as much as 30 percent by 2020, push back the retirement age and hurt lower-income workers most.

“All the government is proposing is to keep reducing pensions and offer private pensions in their stead,” said Marc Blondel, secretary-general of Force Ouvrière, France's third-largest union.

In 1995, the administration dropped a more modest “reform” targeting transport workers after a three-week strike.

The general strike follows street demonstrations in most large French towns on May 1 and a May 6 teachers' strike, the fourth since September. Union plan another general strike for May 25, and more in June unless the proposal is dropped.

## EU directive hits workers

Governments across the European Union are working to comply with an EU directive to raise the average retirement age by up to five years by 2010, as part of efforts to slash spending on social services.

Bernard Thibault, head of the Confédération Générale des Travailleurs, said the European Union's architects have pressed ahead with their economic and political union, paying little heed to the social dimension. “This is suicidal,” he said. “Shareholders and businesses have won a lot of freedom but, from a social point of view, unemployment and job insecurity have got worse.

In Sweden, some 50,000 public sector workers began pay strikes May 12, disrupting hospitals, rubbish collection and other services.

## General strike hits Austria

Up to 200,000 Austrians converged on Vienna from all over the country May 13 to protest the centre-right government's plans to slash pensions and raise the retirement age. The protests coincided with a “Black Tuesday” of industrial action in France, also triggered by pension reforms, indicating a rising tide of popular anger in Europe over welfare, budget and pension cuts.

Austrian workers staged their first general strike in decades May 6, closing public transport, newspapers and other industries. The National Federation of Austrian Unions (OeGB) called the strike to protest pension reforms planned by the governing conservative coalition. The “reforms” would require workers to put in 45 years on the job (up from 40) to be eligible for pensions, and would reduce benefits.

Strikers picketed the country's main roads and shut border crossings with Hungary. Air transport, postal services, freight, banks, hotels, industry and commerce were paralyzed, with the OeGB estimating that one million of its 1.4 m members responded to the strike call. Hundreds of thousands of students and other workers were kept home by the lack of public transit.

Under the bill slated to go to parliament

June 6, retirement age would rise to 65 years (most Austrian men retire at 59 and women at 57), and pensions would be slashed by 30 percent or more, saving the state 2.2 billion euros (\$2.4 bn) over the next four years.

The government denounced the strike, saying “laws are made in parliament and not decided through a demonstration of power in the streets.” Business complained that the strike cost them about 100 million euros.

The strike built on a series of protest meetings held during working hours at more than 2,000 work sites across Austria. Unions

are planning further strikes if the pension reform is not withdrawn.

## Denmark tops in strikes

Denmark tops the European league table when it comes to strikes (measured as lost work days per capita), with Spain in second place. In third place and climbing is Norway.

The Norwegian strike figures fluctuate wildly. In 2000 almost a half a million work days were lost, mainly because private sector workers refused to accept a national wage settlement union leaders had negotiated.



Boston's May Day rally focussed on immigrant workers' rights.

# Argentinian police shoot workers to close factory

Riot police fired rubber bullets and tear gas April 21, injuring dozens of workers, as part of an attack on the Brukman clothes factory in Buenos Aires, which has produced men's suits for 50 years.

Police had evicted the Brukman workers in the middle of the night and turned the entire block into a military zone guarded by machine guns and attack dogs. Unable to get into the factory to complete an order for 3,000 pairs of dress trousers, the workers

gathered a huge crowd of supporters and announced it was time to go back to work.

At 5 p.m., 50 middle-aged seamstresses in no-nonsense haircuts, sensible shoes and blue smocks walked up to the police fence. Someone pushed, the fence fell, and the Brukman women, unarmed and arm in arm, slowly walked through. They had taken only a few steps when police opened fire.

The factory has been run by 57 of its original 157 workers for the past 16 months, after the owners literally walked away from its mounting debts, including six months of unpaid wages. Workers took over the plant Dec. 18, 2001, and have been running it ever since. They have paid off the bills, attracted new clients, and without bosses to support paid themselves steady salaries.

Brukman is one of almost 200 factories across the country that has been taken over and run by its workers. Today, more than 10,000 workers produce everything from tractors to ice cream in the fabrica ocupadas.

Every week brings news of a new occupation: a four-star hotel now run by its cleaning staff, a supermarket taken over by its clerks, a regional airline being turned into a cooperative by the pilots and attendants.

But even as growing numbers of workers look to the self-managed sector to escape Argentina's economic crisis, the government is looking to international banks and corporations – and they are adamant that capitalist law and order must be restored. And so the entire political class is demanding that workers abandon the factories (which in most cases will be promptly closed), accept lives of poverty, and get about the business of paying off the foreign debt. As the federal judge wrote in Brukman's eviction order, “Life and physical integrity have no supremacy over economic interests.”

“They are afraid of us because we have shown that, if we can manage a factory, we can also manage a country,” said Brukman worker Celia Martinez. “That's why this government decided to repress us.”

According to official figures, 57 percent of the population of this once-rich Southern Cone country, Latin America's third-largest economy, has fallen into poverty, and unemployment has soared to over 21 percent.



## SOLIDARITY UNIONISM

Being union  
on our own  
authority

BY ALEXIS BUSS

At recent IWW organizer trainings, we have been talking about the kinds of agreements that solidarity unionists would make with a boss. After all, we aim to secure better conditions and build upon them – part of that means being able to negotiate with management and memorialize the agreements we reach.

Readers of my columns will regularly see me criticize elements of contracts that I think are best left out of the picture if we are to be a strong movement. Some of these elements are desired by entrenched union bureaucracies, some are desirable for management, and some serve both interests, forsaking the workers. I'm talking about dues checkoff, management prerogatives and no-strike clauses. There are other features to contracts, like binding arbitration as the last step of a grievance procedure, time lines favoring management, zipper clauses and so on that I've been known to gripe about too.

But what are the kinds of agreements we should make? Typically I talk about agreements in terms of using direct action to gain power over specific situations and negotiating to memorialize the outcome. But there are elements in present-day contracts that are very useful. What remains to be seen is if a more encompassing contract that truly protects and expands the rights of working people can be negotiated in the present climate.

To my mind, when setting out to negotiate, workers should seek to get: 1) an end to employee-at-will status; 2) a grievance

procedure; 3) whatever economic and working condition improvements they may want and; 4) a past practice clause.

Most contracts contain a “progressive discipline” or “firing for cause” clause, which effectively ends employee-at-will status. I'd be interested to hear from veteran unionists what kind of progressive discipline clauses worked well in your experiences. One that we negotiated here relied on the idea of not making it easy for staff to be disciplined for simple wrongdoing. Management was obliged for each discipline to write an essay discussing the good qualities of the person being disciplined, outline specifically how performance was to be improved, and have regular meetings with the worker to discuss progress. Because it's a bit of a pain in the ass to do this, only the most serious offenses are taken up, and the former trifling nit-picky disciplines have all but vanished.

Grievance procedures are the systematic way that issues that arise in a shop are handled. Many clauses limit the definition of a grievance to issues covered by the contract, effectively cutting off workers' ability to grieve issues not anticipated by the contract. One could argue that issues that aren't covered by the contract are free from the confines of the resolutions proscribed in the contract, so perhaps this isn't the worst thing that could happen. But having a procedure that management has agreed to follow when a any kind of conflict comes up can be very advantageous to workers.

Too often I've seen the wind taken out

of the sails of organizing campaigns with promises from management that are never delivered. A clear process shows everyone when they're just being blown off, and workers can more quickly decide how to up the ante. It's my preference for the last step in a grievance procedure to effectively be ‘all bets are off.’ Yes, have steps beforehand – meetings to discuss the issue, put it in writing, bring in a mediator, whatever makes sense in the structure of your workplace. But letting a third party who does not have to work under the agreement he's binding you to make the ultimate decision is not ideal.

Past practice clauses effectively say, “Unless we reach an agreement, the workplace stays as it is now.” What this does is put the burden of changing the workplace on the shoulders of the employer. They must come to the union to talk about changes, and the union can agree or not, or negotiate. When the workers decide that a situation needs to be fixed, the grievance procedure can be used to put the discussion on a timeline. These clauses have largely disappeared from present-day contracts, but I think it's time for a revival.

Your experiences with the particulars of contracts you've worked under will help your fellow workers understand the benefits and pitfalls of certain kinds of language. Here's your invitation to share your stories – if you want to e-mail them, please send them to ghq@iww.org. If postal mail is better, you can send a letter to IWW, PO Box 13476, Philadelphia PA 19101.



## Truckers fight longer hours...

*continued from page 1*

of piecework is to induce workers to "sweat" themselves in order to maximize productivity and profits.

The Teamsters Union routinely negotiates by-the-mile pay rates for its members, who would object if they didn't; if only because their real earnings are falling. While the Teamsters union thus far has kept its ever-smaller share of the trucking workforce from falling as far back as freight workers in the non-union sector, as union companies transfer work to their non-union operations or close down the union has no strategy for regaining its once much-feared (by corporate America) position in the labor-intensive trucking industry.

At the same time that the feds are lengthening freight workers' driving time; they are shortening the maximum workday by one hour to 14 hours. That means that a driver may work another three hours loading or unloading or whatever, in addition to his maximum 11 hours driving time.

## German union strikes for shorter work week

Members of Germany's biggest manufacturing union, IG Metall, struck May 6 at companies including automaker DaimlerChrysler and railcar manufacturer Bombardier as part of a campaign to win a 35-hour work week.

The strikes in some cases lasted as little as an hour, and were timed to send a message to employers in the run-up to national negotiations. IG Metall is pressing for a 35-hour work week in the formerly communist eastern part of the country to put workers there on par with their western counterparts.

Eastern workers have the same basic wage rates, but work a 38-hour week.

The union says that 13 years after the country was reunified is time enough to start eliminating the difference in hours.

## Google & online campaigning

BY ERIC LEE

In a previous column, I made the case that the Internet has made campaigning much easier, cheaper, faster and more effective than ever before.

All of us who are connected to the net are by now aware of the many different ways in which unions and other progressives campaign – by email, through websites, and so on. But one of the less-well-known tools we have at our disposal – and one which has proven very effective in LabourStart's own campaigning efforts – is the search engine website known as Google.

There was a time just a couple of years ago when hardly anyone had heard of Google. To show just how unknown Google was, when I discovered it and wrote a column about it for a trade union paper, the folks at Google were so happy about getting the plug that they sent me a t-shirt in the post. That wouldn't happen today. Today Google is everywhere – it is by far the most popular (and most effective) tool for finding things on the web.

Indeed, studies have shown that for many people unfamiliar with the net, they think that Google is the only way to actually reach a website. People type in either the name of the organization they are looking for (such as 'IWW' or 'LabourStart') and then click on the 'I'm feeling lucky' button to get to the site. They are apparently unaware of the address bar on the top of web browsers where most of us type in the web address. Many others type in the actual web address (such as <http://www.iww.org>) into Google's search engine in order to get to sites.

Google is everywhere – and that means that if you want to reach people who are interested in a certain country or company, you can easily and cheaply reach them by using Google's AdWords program.

Here's an example. Last week I was in

Wages and working conditions such as hours are negotiated separately in Germany. The union agreed with employers on wages last year after a 10-day strike campaign.

## FIGHT for SHORTER HOURS



## Canadian workers strike against 60-hour week

Workers at Rochman Universal Doors in Scarborough, Ontario, are on strike over the company's demand in first-contract negotiations for a 60-hour week.

"It is almost unbelievable that we are having to fight over something working people thought they won 60 years ago," said Steelworkers Toronto Area Coordinator Stuart Deans. "The Tory government in Ontario is responsible for this with their changes to legislation permitting a 60-hour workweek with no overtime."

The 100 strikers are mostly immigrant workers. They manufacture a full range of doors and supply Home Depot stores throughout Ontario.

## Comp time bill stalled

U.S. lawmakers have put legislation on hold that would allow employers to offer workers compensatory time off at a later date instead of overtime pay, recognizing that they do not have the necessary votes. Unions fear bosses would pressure workers to agree to comp time, and would retain too much power over when the time off could be taken.

However, a Department of Labor proposal to exempt millions of workers from federal overtime laws is moving forward (see article last issue). The proposed regulations would turn existing overtime law on its head, assuming that any worker with a college degree or advanced technical training was an



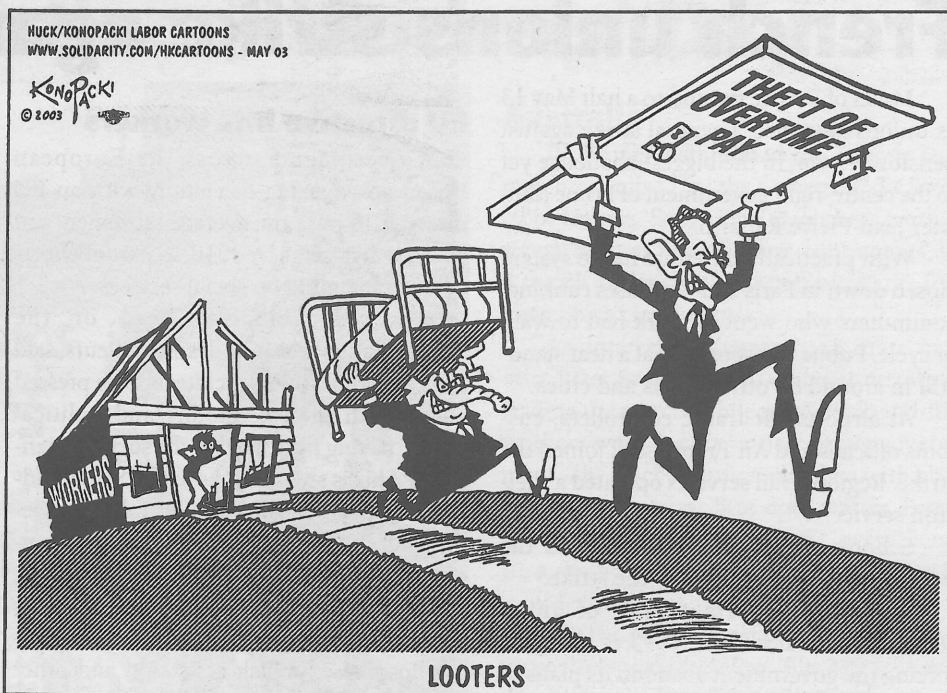
Canada and was asked by trade unionists from British Columbia to help launch an international campaign of protest against the right-wing, anti-union government there. (BC's government is so blatant in its violation of trade union rights that even the International Labour Organization has sat up and noticed.)

To publicize the campaign, we decided to place an ad on Google. The question was which search term would be most effective. We tried 'British Columbia' and we tried 'Vancouver,' but people searching for these terms weren't especially interested in the provincial government's labour rights record.

Then someone remembered that the BC government was bidding to host the 2010 Winter Olympics. So we paid Google to show our ad to anyone searching for the term 'winter olympics.' The results were immediate. Thousands of people searching for this term saw an ad that read "BC violates labour rights – ILO finds Olympic bidder guilty. Demand fair play for BC workers." Clicking on the link brings readers directly to the campaign page on LabourStart where they can read more – and send off their protests.

Imagine the embarrassment this is causing to the BC government. Everyone in the world who looks for information about the Winter Olympics is learning just what kind of government is in power in that part of Canada. Which is, of course, the whole point.

Google ads can be set up in a few minutes, and the cost can be as low as five U.S. cents for every time someone clicks on the ad. It's important to note that you pay only when someone clicks – you don't pay for



exempt professional employee. Similarly, low-paid "managerial" and sales employees required to perform duties such as cleaning up, working cash registers or delivering goods would lose their overtime protection.

U.S. workers already put in some of the longest working hours on the planet. Not only do we work a longer work week and get shorter vacations – we also put in more overtime, much of it mandatory. Workers who are considered exempt under present regulations put in over twice as many overtime hours a week as those who must be paid for their time.

For years, employers have been routinely misclassifying workers as exempt in order to escape paying overtime. But as the U.S. work week continues to get longer each year, many workers have sued to recover their stolen overtime pay. So the bosses have turned to the government to bail them out.

The text of the proposed regulations can be found at [www.dik.gov/esa/regs/fedreg/proposed/2003033101.pdf](http://www.dik.gov/esa/regs/fedreg/proposed/2003033101.pdf) or in the March 31 *Federal Register*. Public comments – which the Department of Labor is required to into

showing the ad. Google can show the ad a million times and if no one clicks, you pay nothing.

Obviously, it doesn't work that way. You need a certain minimum click-through rate or else Google will drop your ad.

And you can't say whatever you want. Google dropped ads put up by the 'No Sweat' campaigners in the UK against Puma because they broke Google's rules about 'defamatory' speech. (But they continued to run similar ads from LabourStart which for some obscure reason didn't appear to break any rules.)

I said that the ads were cheap. Here's how cheap: when LabourStart placed an ad based on the keyword 'SARS' it was shown 273,000 times. 1,785 people clicked on it and visited our special web page about union reactions to the SARS epidemic around the world.

We paid Google \$89.50. Is there any other form of advertising that allows you to reach a quarter of a million people for under \$100 – people who are searching for information that you might be providing? Probably not.

I just searched on the word 'wobbly' in Google and learned about an online labour radio service in Australia and a steakhouse in Vermont (both of which whet my appetite, though in different ways). But if the IWW websites were anywhere to be found, I didn't see them.

We're currently running a Colombia campaign on LabourStart protesting the killings of 130 trade unionists in that country in the last year. Go to Google and search for the term 'Colombia' and you'll see our ad. Even if you don't click through, you'll learn that Colombia leads the world in murders of trade unionists.

Google AdWords is an incredibly powerful tool for online campaigning. Unions should make more use of it.

Eric Lee is author of *The Labour Movement and the Internet: The New Internationalism*.

account when deciding whether to accept, reject or revise the proposed regulations – are being accepted through June 30. Interested readers can obtain a sample comment from [shorterhours@union.org.za](mailto:shorterhours@union.org.za)

## Take Back Your Time Day

Plans for Take Back Your Time Day (Oct. 24 – marking the point when U.S. workers have put in as many hours on the job as our European fellow workers, and so should have the rest of the year off) are moving forward. A resource manual – including a chapter on reaching out to unions – is in press, teach-ins are being organized in several cities, and organizers are looking for contacts to create events in their communities.

For information, write the Shorter Worktime Group at 69 Dover St., Somerville MA 02144 or visit [www.timeday.org](http://www.timeday.org).

## Picking pockets in the schools

The University of Illinois will cut academic salaries this September for one month under the guise of a change in pay dates from the 21st to the 16th of the month. Since workers will be "paid early" that month, the university is going to deduct five days' pay.

Some bean counter came up with this little con game as a way of alleviating the university's budget crisis. Illinois' new democratic governor asked the university to make an 8 percent reduction in its budget.

How do you cut a week's pay from your employees' paychecks? Change the pay date.

A similar scam was tried a few years ago in Hawaii. There, officials decided to push pay dates back one day every two weeks, translating into a 4.2 percent pay cut for the first year. While the three largest public sector unions accepted the scheme, university faculty were able to block it in court.

In Massachusetts, the state is simply refusing to pay salary increases it agreed to last year, saying it can't afford them after slashing taxes for upper-income residents. No doubt, landlords will be glad to forego their rent hikes in deference to those who think they have better things to do with their cash.

## Privatization fails in Philadelphia school system

Philadelphia school officials have canceled their contract with Chancellor Beacon Academies, which was managing five elementary schools for the district as part of a privatization plan that turned over 45 city schools to seven firms last year.

Twenty of those schools are being operated by Edison, the country's largest private school operator. Although conceding that there is little evidence that Edison has improved the schools it is managing, officials said it "has a presence in the schools" and will be given more time to show results.

The city said Chancellor Beacon had not kept promises to reduce class size, implement an after-school program, or provide professional development for teachers.



## Seattle Wobs confront fascists

BY CURTIS VAUGHAN

Seattle Wobs have been central in forming an anti-fascist group to drive members of the National Alliance out of the area. Since the beginning of the year the National Alliance has become openly active in the Puget Sound region. Their first appearance was at anti-Iraq war rallies, to which they came with placards reading, "No War for Israel." At first most demonstrators were unaware of who these protestors were and thus they were allowed to participate. That participation, however, ended at the April 12th rally when Wobblies confronted the fascists and forced them out of the march.

Disconcerting is the fact that many marchers and organizers have been critical of this confrontational attitude toward the nazis. These liberals do not fully appreciate just what the fascists represent. Part of the problem may rest in the liberal (in a different sense) usage of the word "fascism." Often Bush, the government, or one's local police are casually referred to as fascist. But however anti-democratic, racist and violent these institutions may be, they hardly compare to the onslaught that would be brought on by the fascists and their nazi cohorts.

Opposition to the Klan is clear in the States due to the first-hand experience Americans have had with these racists. But fascists like the National Alliance are at least as dangerous. They have committed many assaults, and some murders, against those who challenge their racist views.

Here in the Puget Sound, National Alliance members have appeared at punk rock concerts, after which they have picked out straggling punkers to beat up.

An anti-fascist group has drawn together led by Wobbly activists to counter this threat. The current tasks at hand are informing communities in the area as to who the fascists are and what the National Alliance is. We hope to build a larger force to counter every attempt by the National Alliance to show its face in the area and to drive them out.

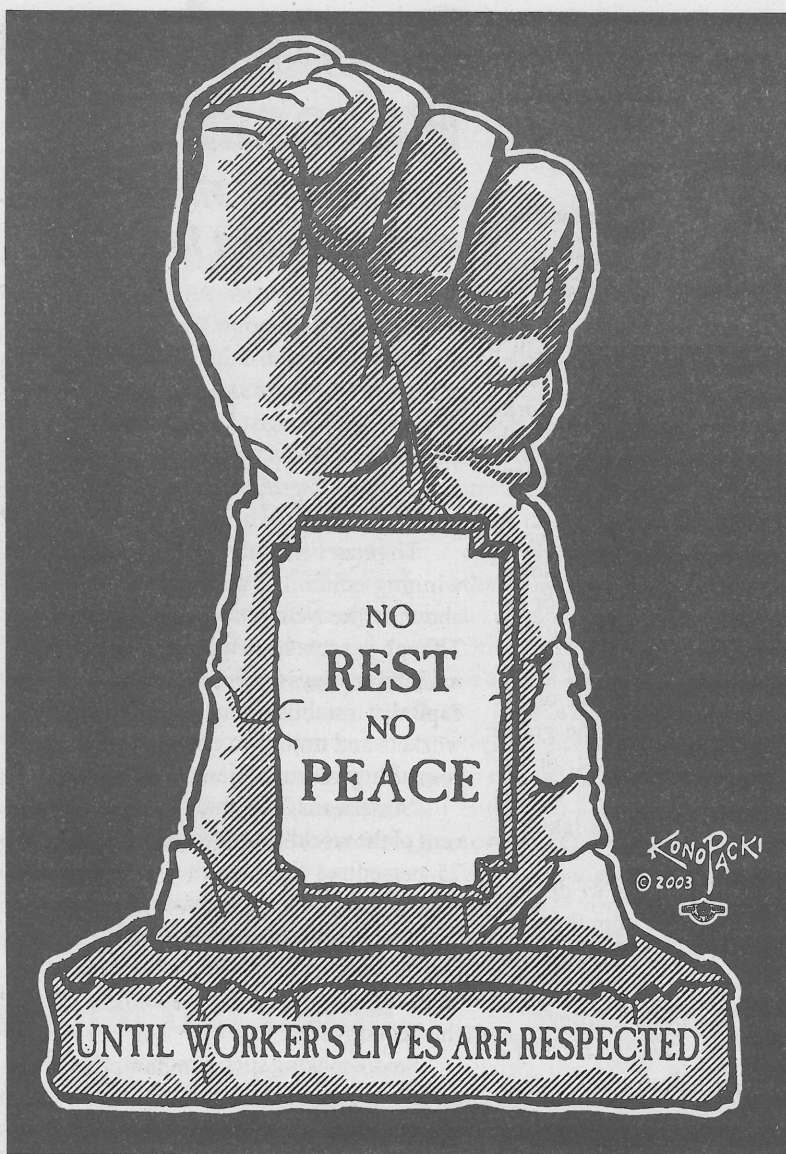
## AWOL Bush found on carrier deck

That's the headline on the latest issue of *Wage Slave World News*, self-proclaimed "trashy journalism for the working class." Appearing several years ago as a supplement to the *Industrial Worker*, WSWN now appears online at [www.solidarity.com](http://www.solidarity.com).

In addition to the strange case of a Texas National Guard pilot who had been AWOL for 31 years before dramatically reappearing on the deck of a U.S. aircraft carrier 30 miles off the California coast, the May 8 issue features a "class war body count" listing the number of workers killed at work (2,347), the number who died from workplace injuries (19,572) and the number of members of the employing class killed at work (0).

## Workers lose pay to Bush

Some 340 Airlite Plastics workers (in Omaha, Nebraska) are losing a day's pay after management shut down production lines May 12 and sent workers out to provide a backdrop to Bush's speech calling for massive tax breaks for the wealthy.



## Bosses "must not be untouchable"

British unions are demanding that the "Labour" government honor its election pledge to send the bosses of companies that kill their workers to prison. The party had pledged to create a new offense of corporate manslaughter for company directors. However, no action has been taken to introduce such legislation.

About 250 British workers die every year on the job, a figure which does not include deaths from long-term occupational diseases and debilitating injuries. While any worker who killed their boss would face certain jail time, the companies that kill them are instead fined a few thousand pounds.

## Iranian workers protest

A wave of strikes is sweeping Iran as workers protest unpaid wages. On April 16 more than 30,000 textile workers and supporters in Behshahr staged an angry protest. Growing numbers of workers are turning to sit-ins, strikes and street blockages in their struggles against delayed payment of wages and for improved working conditions.

In Teheran riot police prohibited planned May Day protests against low wages, the first time May Day rallies were outlawed since the Islamic regime came to power.

Iranian officials say they cancelled the rallies for fear they would turn into anti-American demonstrations. Iran prohibits independent unions, but given the deteriorating economic situation its official unions increasingly find themselves forced to confront employers, especially over unpaid wages.

## Wobbly quarter

IWW member Helen Keller is the honoree on the new Alabama quarter issued as part of a commemorative series honoring a significant personage from each state.

Keller joined the IWW shortly after the Lawrence strike: "I became an IWW because I found out that the Socialist party was too slow. It is sinking in the political bog. ... The true task is to unite and organize all workers on an economic basis, and it is the workers themselves who must secure freedom for themselves, who must grow strong."

"Nothing can be gained by political action. That is why I became an IWW." (The full interview can be found at [www.iww.org](http://www.iww.org))

## Workplace carnage...

continued from page 1

injuries could have been prevented by the OSHA ergonomics standards overturned by the government last year.

## Weapon of mass destruction

Workplace deaths and injuries are not accidents – with a few exceptions, they are the inevitable result of an economic system in which workers' lives are not valued.

The ergonomics standards were squashed because business complained that they would be too expensive to meet. Growing numbers of workers die in fatal falls because employers want to save a few bucks on safety equipment. Workers inhale toxic solvents and other chemicals on a daily basis in many parts of the world because it's cheaper to do business that way (indeed, in many cases the work was moved there precisely because it was possible to poison workers).

The modern workplace is a weapon of mass destruction, killing more workers on a daily basis than die in all (other) terrorist incidents around the world each year.

But it need not be that way. "Accident" rates are very high in the Asian "tiger" economies, but much lower in Western Europe. Where workers have strong unions and a tradition of acting to protect their safety, relatively few workers die on the job.

Even the employer-dominated ILO concedes that even the best-framed health and safety regulations will have little impact unless the workers concerned are able to collectively defend their interests.

On April 28, unions representing tens of millions of workers paused to commemorate Workers Memorial Day and to remember the millions of workers killed and maimed on the job. They will do the same next year, and for years to come, unless we organize on the job to put a stop to this murder and mayhem.

## Cosatu demands Aids action

The Congress of South African Trade Unions will take to the streets if the government does not address the need for Aids treatment for impoverished workers.

"We can't afford the drugs as the working class," said Cosatu's Western Cape treasurer, Caroline Scheepers. "Many people are dying." The government has been refusing to meet with unions on the issue.

## Nestle skips out on pensions

Since 1898, Fulton, N.Y., was home to one of Nestle's most important factories, employing 450 workers. But it closed the plant last fall. Why? Because the average worker was age 52, and many were getting close to retirement. By closing the plant, Nestle no longer had to pay into the union's pension plan, saving millions of dollars.

This makes good business sense. Nestle is one of the most profitable food companies in the world. It didn't get there by paying workers the full value of their production.

## Union evicted from offices for anti-war stance

National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees Union's District 1199, based in Albuquerque, N.M., was evicted from its offices last month, after their landlord filed a complaint alleging that the union "breached the terms of its lease by holding an anti-war demonstration."

The local did hold an antiwar demonstration, but it was a few blocks away. The landlord called police on union members as they gathered in a meeting room reserved for the March 7 event, but police left once they realized the situation.

District 1199 lost its case in part because its attorney failed to file a response with the court. The union has relocated into an office leased from a UFCW local. Its president, Danny Esquibil, said the union has nothing to worry about from its new landlord.

"I said, 'Here, you're among friends, you can say whatever you want,'" Esquibil said.



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## Making dreams real...

continued from page 1

life should be. It creates fantasies where we dream of living someone else's working-class life. We dream of going to sea or driving a big rig while we are stuck in a boring office job or on some damn assembly line – all the while not realizing that those people whose jobs we desire are also dreaming about doing something different.

The problem is not so much what type of work we do, but rather the conditions under which we do it. There is a lack of fulfillment in the prepackaged culture that leaves us longing for something more. One of the necessities of working-class social change is a revival of a true working-class culture. The experiences of working class life as expressed by working people; be it social commentary, poetry, autobiographies, storytellers, folk singers, or filmed first-hand accounts of working class life, are revolutionary acts of liberation.

As Aunt Molly Jackson put it when talking about what a true folk song is: "I sat down at the dining room table and with the pains in my heart and the conditions, as I often do; I composed a song of the conditions of the people, Which is the only kind of a song which is a folk song ... is what the folks composes out of their real lives, out of their sorrow and out of their happiness and all."

This is the motivation behind my writ-

ing, for I truly believe that when working people no longer accept the images and definitions by those outside of our class, and begin to speak for ourselves, then we will be able to act upon our dreams and make them into reality.

So let the voices of the coal miner, the sweatshop slave, the office worker, the yardbird, the truck driver and all other working people be heard once again. For our struggle against the way things are is not just about better wages and conditions, but also the freeing of the creative spirit of the working class. We must once again learn to speak for ourselves and cast off the useless parasites that seek to speak for us.

We are the experts on the subject of working-class life, not those that claim to be. Were one of those self-proclaimed labor experts who write books about things they have never experienced ever to come to my workplace they would be like a fish out of the sea. They would be sent off on the grand quest for the keys to the sea chest, or the mythical skyhook, pipe stretcher or bucket of steam, not knowing they were taking a fool's journey.

So it must be asked: how can we depend on the education of our class from the writings of those who would be lost if placed into the reality of that which they write about? Would this not also be a fool's journey?

From: *Yardbird Blues: Twenty Years of a Wobbly in the Maritime Industry*



A few weeks ago I received a greeting card from a good fellow worker who lives in one of the outlying condominium developments on the outskirts of Denver, Colorado. Within the card was a clipped-out picture of a prairie dog. Said fellow worker happens to share an appreciation for prairie dogs. They are social creatures that evolved a communal existence and have their own urban centers. Within shouting distance of my FW's home was a large empty lot that had a prairie dog metropolis which we drove by each time we approached or left his house.

There were always a few individuals standing outside their burrows, as if keeping guard for the rest of their community. Contingent upon the clemency of the weather, more of the prairie dog community would be standing outside their respective burrows. Prairie dogs stand upright the same as we two-legged humans do, and I have long considered that a charming sight.

Having no adequate defenses against other predatory creatures, their principal mode of survival was for a few of their number to stand watch for the rest of the community. In that way they were able to hold their own against the winged and four-legged predators, but certain segments of the two-legged predators were to become their Waterloo.

The fellow worker told me there had been repeated attempts to poison the prairie dog community on the part of the real estate developers. Unfortunately, they have finally been successful and the former prairie dog metropolis is now become more suburban sprawl. My little relatives will not be there to greet me any more.

This is what people call progress, progress supposedly consistent with the Judeo-Christian ethic. Had the Industrial Revolution occurred a few centuries earlier and a few hundred miles further south, we would be talking about the Judeo-Islamic ethic instead, as both ethics evolved from the same Old Testicle. And it is not solely "Western" religion that is at fault. Wherever the institution of private property was established with its accompanying class society, the prevailing ideology has been one of anti-nature.

Unlike my indigenous ancestors, who looked upon the environment and the other forms of life which share this environment with us as something to live with in harmony, the prevailing notion today holds that nature is an adversary to be conquered. The book of Genitals says that man was put on earth to have dominion over all other creatures. Example: "The conquest of the West," or as Teddy Roosevelt referred to the Amazon rain forest as an untenanted wilderness. This does not mean that "western" thought alone is culpable. Wherever a society has been perverted by greed, there are always the dominant ideologies that will accommodate that greed.

So, fellow worker reader, this humble little rag is not only concerned with the welfare of us two-legged creatures, but also with the other forms of life we share this planet with. My indigenous antecedents, like all others who survived by living close to nature, believed in making sure there was enough left over for the seventh generation. It is up to us in this present day and age to decide what we are going to leave to those who are coming after we are long gone. Do we want to condemn them to living in a world where there is nothing else but other humans subsisting on chemically augmented food substitutes? I don't think we want that. Take to heart the simple little message of our little periodical.

Draftees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals.

— C.C. Redcloud

# Toward a green Perestroika

## What the NY Times' star columnist left out

BY LOUIS PRISCO

"Imagine if tomorrow President Bush asked all Americans to turn down their home thermostats to 65 degrees so America would not be so much of a hostage to Middle East oil. Trust me, every American would turn down the thermostat to 65 degrees. Liberating us from the grip of OPEC would be our Victory Garden."

Thomas Friedman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist and author, wrote the above in the *New York Times* Dec. 9, 2001. Though to some he may appear leftist, Friedman never strays far from the position of the capitalist establishment. The relevance of workers and unions to energy production is something he would never talk about.

"Americans," he said, "who are 5 percent of the world's population," are "hogging 25 percent of the world's oil." Amen. But what to do about it? Improve gas mileage? Walk more and use bicycles? Increase funding for mass transit? No, we are asked instead to "imagine" W. Bush asking us to turn the heat down.

Before making such a request, would the president not want to consult with his fellow big shots in the energy industry? I wonder how much even a voluntary cap on the thermostat would cost them.

The United States, in Friedman's words, is "a hostage" to "Middle East oil" and "in the grip" of OPEC. Hardly a disparaging word from him about Arco, ExxonMobil or the other Western companies that profit from petroleum. Big Business, in his view, either deserves only mild criticism or its crimes are minor when compared to those of our alleged enemies, whether Communist or Islamic.

Alternative energy sources could be developed, he said, thus making America less dependent on the foreigners in OPEC. But what about our dependence on oil companies that are American-owned? With the help of their advertising and public relations allies and compliant politicians, these companies have encouraged our wasteful addiction to gasoline.

He is correct, though, in saying that renewable sources of energy are worth looking at. Among them are the sun, wind, rivers and alcohol. It's just that oil is more profitable. Wall Street will go where the money is, and that place today is the oil fields.

On this and other issues, liberals in Congress and in the media have at best only weakly challenged the corporate leadership. Maybe that's because many liberals are invested in the stock and bond markets, or receive corporate political funding, and won't bite the cuff link that feeds them. The strong support in Washington for war is certainly related to Iraq's oil deposits.

I can think of one idea you certainly won't hear about from Friedman: a worldwide labor union in the oil industry – a democratic union in which Jews, Christians and Muslims, as well as other workers, would participate equally.

There has been so much environmental destruction that a mere cap on the thermostat may not be enough. Nothing may now suffice except what Gorbachev called *perestroika*, but an economic one – a complete restructuring of the industries. The goal would be a new system of production to meet the needs of people, as opposed to corporate needs, and without injuring the ecological system on which we all depend.

In such a green *perestroika*, environmental groups like Earth First! and grassroots elements of the Sierra Club could have a big role. The same can be said of the activists who have been demonstrating around the world against "globalization" (as global capitalism is called). There would be an even greater role, however, for workers and for



industrial unions that are active – like the transnational corporations – on every part of the planet.

Friedman talks about consumers outside of the workplace – including students and lawyers – who have won victories on behalf of workers. In the Kathie Lee Gifford controversy of 1999, for example, he notes that apparel companies agreed to improve conditions in their overseas factories. (See his *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Chapter 10.)

But a globally organized labor movement, if it flexed its muscles, could accomplish a lot more than that. Such a union would have enough clout to demand a shift from oil to other energy sources. Within its grasp would be an entirely new economic order – one in which corporations and nation-states would either have to behave themselves, or be made redundant. "Imagine," as Friedman said, that.

C'mon. Unions are greedy and parochial. They don't innovate. Yes, there are unions which like Esau have sold their birthright, but not the Industrial Workers of the World. The IWW's highest officer receives clerical wages. Its concept of "one big union" overrides all of the barriers that have kept workers divided and conquered. The IWW Preamble now contains the words, added by the present generation of young workers, "in harmony with the earth."

The IWW's 98-year-old program was designed for contesting – and eventually replacing – the capitalist system. Long before the term "globalization" was coined, the IWW published a booklet entitled *World Labor Needs a Union*. Its program assumes that the folks in the best place for changing the system are the common workers who operate the system.

Pundits like Thomas Friedman are apt to think of wage workers and environmental activists as two separate categories of people. In actuality, there is a growing and important area of overlap between the two. A good place for them to unite is inside the IWW, a union which has a vision of workers caring for the environment, instead of exploiting and polluting it.

## Kidnapped unionist destitute

Four years after a South Carolina unionist was kidnapped and committed to a mental institution in retaliation for his organizing efforts, he still has not been reinstated to his job and is now destitute.

Gary McClain, was organizing for IUOE Local 470 at the Beech Island Tenneco Packaging Plant when the company got a New York psychiatrist to sign papers without seeing McClain diagnosing him as mentally ill. Using this fabrication, on July 29, 1999, McClain was arrested by Aiken County Sheriff's deputies and confined to a private mental facility for two weeks until the union was able to get him released.

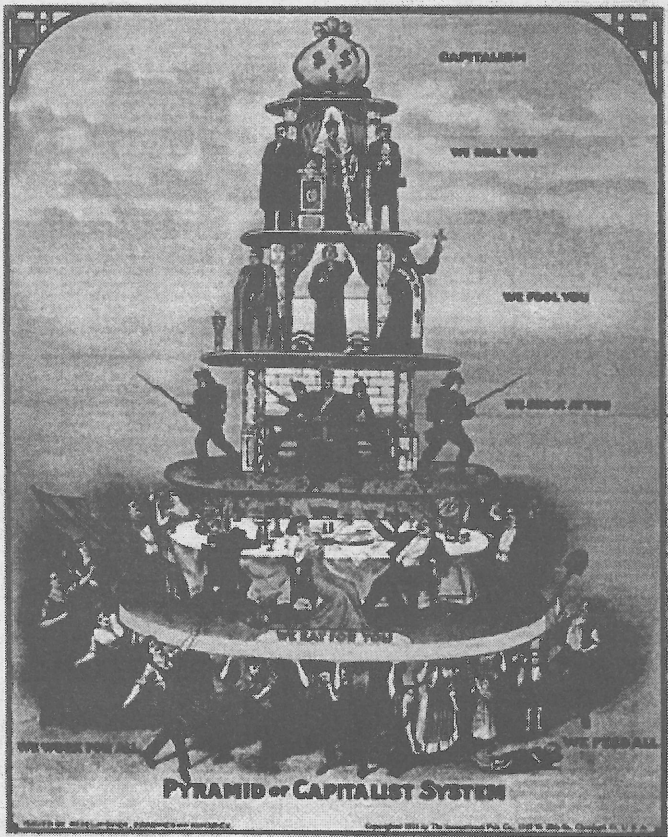
The NLRB ruled that McClain was detained, and ultimately lost his job, for protected union activities, but he still has not been returned to work – nor has his union helped him obtain training or a new job. More than 13,000 workers are illegally fired each year for union activity, and only a handful are ever reinstated.


Contributions can be sent to McClain at: 1623 N. Silverton St., Jackson SC 29831.



# Books for Rebellious Workers

## New Posters!



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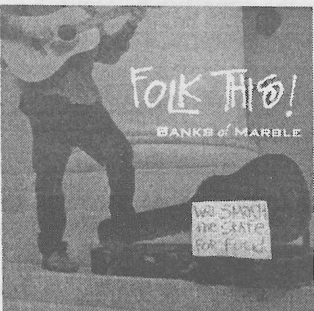
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## Writings by Wobblies

**Upon the Backs of Labor: Unruly Working Class Essays** by Arthur J. Miller  
A compilation of 18 essays by Arthur J. Miller, editor of *Bayou La Rose*; a miner, pipefitter, trucker and berry picker; and one of the most prolific writers of the present-day IWW. Themes include working class environmentalism, revolutionary unionism, and shorter work hours. Miller writes in the introduction, “If working people are to liberate themselves from the exploitation of the employing class, one of the things they must do is to relearn the art of self-expression. For to depend on others to completely speak for us workers, means to limit our needs to the interpretation of those that cannot truly understand the realities of our lives.”  
80 pages, **\$8.00**

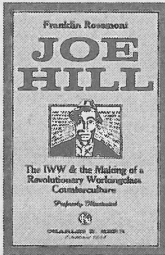
**Harlem Glory** by Claude McKay.  
Written in the 1940s, this semi-autobiographical novel by the renowned Jamaican poet and novelist evokes the life of Harlem in the Great Depression and New Deal. McKay captures the exuberant clash of social movements and ideologies, acutely sensitive to the vitality and diversity of Black culture and drawing on McKay’s experiences in the IWW and the socialist movement.  
112 pages, **\$10.00**

## Labor History

**The CIO’s Left-Led Unions** Edited by Steven Rosswurm. In 1949 and 1950 the CIO expelled several left-wing unions. This collection explores the history of eleven of these unions, addressing the role of race and government policy in shaping unionism, the impact of anti-communism on race relations and working conditions, and the impact of the expulsions on the labor movement. Several of these provided an important counterpoint to more bureaucratic tendencies.  
**\$10.00**

**May Day: A Short History of the International Workers’ Holiday 1886-1986** by Philip S. Foner  
This is the story of May Day, a holiday born in the USA a hundred years ago and since 1890 celebrated by working people the world over. In this short history, Philip Foner clarifies the dramatic origins of labor’s May Day and recounts many highlights of celebrations through the years.  
183 pages, **\$7.00**

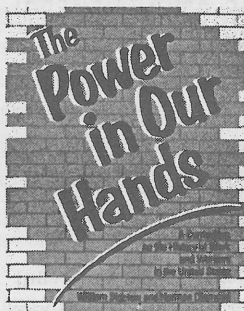
**Joe Hill: The IWW and the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture** by Franklin Rosemont.  
“In Franklin Rosemont, Joe Hill has finally found a chronicler worthy of his revolutionary spirit, sense of humor, and poetic imagination. This is no ordinary biography. It is a journey into the Wobbly culture that made Joe Hill and the capitalist culture that killed him. But as Rosemont suggest in this remarkable book, Joe Hill never really dies. He will live in the minds of young rebels as long as his songs are sung, his ideas are circulated, and his political descendants keep fighting for a better day.” –Robin D. G. Kelley  
639 pages, **\$17.00**



## IWW Literature

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## Labor Education



**The Power in Our Hands**  
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## Organizing

**The New Rank and File**  
by Staughton and Alice Lynd  
With this inspiring collection of interviews with working class organizers from many facets of the international labor movement, the Lynds demonstrate the type of grassroots approach that we need if we are to build the strength to win against a global, wealthy and well-armed foe. Directed at two groups – rank-and-file workers and young people entering the labor movement – this book directly takes on the ideology of business unionism and offers hope and ideas for democratic, solidarity unionism.  
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## Bangladeshi garment workers celebrate May Day

BY AMIRUL HAQUE AMIN, GENERAL SECRETARY, NATIONAL GARMENTS WORKERS FEDERATION

The National Garments Workers Federation launched a campaign for the implementation of the May Day holiday in all garment factories in Bangladesh this year. May Day has been a legal paid holiday since 1972, but the garment sector has ignored the law.

Last year the NGWF organized a campaign that succeeded in winning the holiday

at 90 percent of garment factories. This year, NGWF decided to go for full implementation, organizing dozens of local and factory-based workers meetings across the country.

Under strong union pressure, the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association ordered all factories to close. As a result, large numbers of women garment workers were able to participate in the May Day Rally. The NGWF's May Day rally is pictured above.

## Strike challenges Workers Party regime

More than 10,000 auto workers struck General Motors' largest Brazilian factory April 22 – along with Ford, Renault and Volvo plants throughout the country – ultimately winning substantial wage hikes to compensate them for a 14.6 percent increase in the cost of living since they last won a pay hike in September.

The GM workers also demanded a 36-hour work week and an "inflation clause" that guarantees a pay raise every time consumer prices jump more than 3 percent.

"Lula was elected on the promise of change and it hasn't happened," says Luiz Carlos Prates, leader of the strike at GM. "We

want protection against inflation but the government is against it. They're putting themselves ahead of the workers."

The strike was the second major walkout by factory workers under the new center-left government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a former metalworker and union leader. Lula, who took office on Jan. 1, has distanced himself from the disputes.

In late March, tens of thousands of metalworkers at more than 80 auto parts plants in the industrial hub of Sao Paulo staged a three-day walkout, returning to work after winning pay raises to compensate for an inflationary spurt last year.

## China celebrates May Day by jailing worker activists

China convicted two labor activists of "attempting to overthrow state political power" in a May 1 trial which their attorney was not permitted to attend, and at which defendants Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang were barred from presenting evidence.

"China chose to celebrate May Day this year by trampling on the rights of workers and intimidating their families," said Brad Adams, executive director of the Asia Division of Human Rights Watch. "These convictions give the lie to Beijing's smooth rhetoric about improving labor rights."

Yao and Xiao received seven and four-year sentences respectively. They had been detained in March 2002 after organizing tens of thousands of laid-off workers to peacefully protest in Liaoning province.

On the day of the trial, hundreds of Liaoning workers gathered to protest at the court building, where they were met by a strong show of police force.

## Cambodian Gap workers smash factory windows

Hundreds of workers from a Cambodian clothing factory which produces apparel for U.S. clothing giant Gap Inc. protested outside the plant April 23. Several windows were smashed at the Might Spectra Knitting Factory as around 500 workers held a noisy rally protesting their employer's refusal to hike wages to \$38 per dozen sweaters from the current \$17 per dozen.

## Danish IT firms exploiting foreign high-tech workers

The HK union charges Danish companies with abusing the green card ordinance to import cheap Information Technology labor. "Several of these imported IT workers are working for appallingly low wages," said Karin Retvig, chairman of HK Service.

Retvig said it was grotesque that the government was permitting imports of cheap foreign manpower at a time when IT unemployment in Denmark has reached 12.5 percent.

Police attacked 100 laid-off factory workers blockading a street outside the headquarters of Datong's city government May 9, seizing their banner reading: "We want to survive. We want to eat. We want to protect the state investment. We want to protect the legal rights of the workers."

The workers were laid off in 1999, when their state-owned drug factory was closed. A private company from southern China recently purchased the empty factory for its land. The workers, most of whom receive virtually no pensions or welfare benefits, are furious that none of the purchase price was shared with them.

Last December, more than 10,000 laid-off workers and their families protested in sub-zero temperatures on the streets of Datong, complaining of corruption and unpaid social benefits. One report said they torched the limousine of a senior official who came to meet them.

## Zimbabwe: General strike

Zimbabwean police arrested eight union leaders April 22 on the eve of a three-day strike called to protest price increases that would triple the price of gasoline and hyperinflation. The BBC reported that banks, factories and stores across Zimbabwe were closed by the strike.

Zimbabwe's Congress of Trade Unions says it would cost many workers more to get to work than they earn in a day. Inflation is running at more than 200%, and unemployment is soaring. In March, 80 percent of businesses were closed in a two-day general strike. Hundreds of dissidents were arrested in the crackdown that followed.

## Unions halt rail sell-off

South Korean unions have forced the government to scrap plans for partial privatization of the railways in exchange for calling off a major strike. The move sent shivers through Korean financial markets, which fear other privatizations could be affected.

## Australian building unions under attack

As Australian federal officials consider action against the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, provincial authorities in Victoria are threatening massive fines against the union for efforts to maintain union shop conditions.

The Abbott regime and the media have made much of the Cole Royal Commission's 392 findings of "unlawful conduct" in the building trades, most against the CFMEU and its officers. However, these "unlawful" incidents center on charges that union officials entered work sites to talk to their members without immediately notifying employers of their presence. Based on such incidents, the Commission issued 212 recommendations designed to strip construction workers of their power in the industry.

The Commission refused to take testimony from people with evidence of illegal activity by employers, and accepted serious charges against unions despite the lack of any evidence supporting them (aside from the testimony of employers, many of whom were admittedly violating employment laws).

The CFMEU contends it must investigate tax fraud, rip-offs and safety issues in an industry built on low-bid contracts. To

do otherwise would expose workers to plummeting living standards, insecurity, serious injury and even death.

The Commission simply rejects this basic union principle. The reaction of its attorney to a Queensland dispute in which unionists defend their actions by tendering evidence of a worker falling down a lift shaft, dozens of photos of safety problems, and a video highlighting more than 100 safety issues, is most instructive.

"For every practical purpose it is meaningless to ask whether any workplace, in particular a large building site, is safe," he said. "We therefore do not propose to consider whether the Nambour site was safe."

The industrial landscape redrawn by Cole would limit unions to negotiating contracts once every two or three years. Other than that, they should their sticky beaks out of the industry. If they don't, they will face a range of fines and the possibility of imprisonment or deregistration.

Meanwhile, in Western Australia, two union officials were recently acquitted of assault and trespass charges brought after they insisted on exercising their right to enter work sites and confer with union members.

## Colombian unionist gunned down

As workers around the world were celebrating May Day, Juan de Jesús Gómez, president of a rural workers union in San Alberto, was being gunned down.

His murder brings to 130 the number of unionists killed in Colombia in the past year.

So far, no one has been arrested, charged or convicted of any of these murders.

As part of a campaign to pressure the Colombian government to stop the killings, Labourstart is asking workers to visit its cam-

paign page at [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org) and send off a message of protest. A electronic newsletter is available at [www.ictur.labournet.org/Colombia-bulletin-details.htm](http://www.ictur.labournet.org/Colombia-bulletin-details.htm)

And LabourStart has purchased an advertisement on the Google website so that anyone searching for the term 'Colombia' will learn about the killing of unionists there. (Contributions toward the cost would be appreciated; details on how to contribute are on the LabourStart web site.)



May Day marchers in Bolivia

## Workers drive CC.OO. leader off stage

BY VICKY SHORT

The closing speeches at this year's May Day demonstration in Madrid had to be cancelled after the general secretary of the Communist Party-linked CC.OO union, José María Fidalgo, was hit over the head with a banner pole by an irate member of his union.

Workers from Sintel, a former subsidiary of the state telephone company, who have been fighting to regain their jobs for nearly seven years, began the day by blocking the joint UGT-CCOO march for more than half an hour.

Throughout the entire route of the march, Fidalgo was the target of chants by the Sintel workers and their supporters, accusing him of having sold out their struggle.

Sintel was a subsidiary of Telefónica until it was privatized and sold in 1996 to Mas Tec, a firm belonging to the late Jorge Mas Canosa – founder of the Cuban-American National Foundation, linked to terrorist attacks on Cuba. The firm employed 2,000 workers in Spain and 3,000 in subsidiaries spread over Latin America. The Spanish workers have not been paid since April 2001.

The CGT helped negotiate a settlement to reinstate hundreds of workers and compensate the rest, but workers say it has never been implemented.

## Cuba: Authorities spy on independent unions

In testimony during the April show trials of 78 Cuban dissidents, including six activists from the country's beleaguered independent labor movement, it was learned that at least two police agents had infiltrated into the movement's leadership.

Aleida de las Mercedes Godinez, a former math teacher and agent for the secret police, testified that she received about \$700 a month from U.S. organizations as head of the National Independent Workers Union.

Cuba bans independent unions and has outlawed strikes and collective bargaining. The country's only authorized union federation, the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), is totally controlled by the state. Workers who try to organize independent unions are persecuted and risk losing their jobs or even going to jail.